Exploring Society: India and Beyond

Social Science Textbook for Grade 7 | Part 2

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0782

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Social Science Textbook for Grade 7 Part 2

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Foreword

The National Education Policy 2020 envisages a system of education in the country that is rooted in Indian ethos and its civilisational accomplishments in all domains of human endeavour and knowledge, while at the same time preparing the students to constructively engage with the prospects and challenges of the 21st century. The basis for this aspirational vision has been well laid out by the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023 across curricular areas at all stages. Having nurtured the students' inherent abilities touching upon all five planes of human existence, the *pañchakośhas* in the Foundational and the Preparatory Stages have paved the way for the progression of their learning further at the Middle Stage. Thus, the Middle Stage acts as a bridge between the Preparatory and the Secondary Stages, spanning three years from Grade 6 to Grade 8.

The NCF-SE 2023, at the Middle Stage, aims to equip students with the skills that are needed to grow, as they advance in their lives. It endeavours to enhance their analytical, descriptive, and narrative capabilities, and to prepare them for the challenges and opportunities that await them. A diverse curriculum, covering nine subjects ranging from three languages — including at least two languages native to India — to Science, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Art Education, Physical Education and Well-Being, and Vocational Education promotes their holistic development.

Such a transformative learning culture requires certain essential conditions. One of them is to have appropriate textbooks in different curricular areas as these textbooks will play a central role in mediating between content and pedagogy — a role that will strike a judicious balance between direct instruction and opportunities for exploration and inquiry. Among the other conditions, classroom arrangement and teacher preparation are crucial to establish conceptual connections both within and across curricular areas.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training, on its part, is committed to providing students with such high-quality textbooks. Various Curricular Area Groups, which have been constituted for this

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purpose, comprising notable subject-experts, pedagogues, and practising teachers as their members, have made all possible efforts to develop such textbooks. The Social Science textbook for Grade 7 — *Exploring Society: India and Beyond Part 2* — has been prepared for the second half of Grade 7. It carries forward the themes and approach of Part 1 of Grade 7, and makes strong linkages with Part 1 of the Grade 8 Social Science Textbook. The focus is on core concepts and major developments. It endeavours to keep the students engaged in learning through illustrations, maps and pictures laid out in an attractive design. There are abundant reflective exercises and activities embedded in the text to support exploration, discovery and meaning-making. The thematic approach with a multidisciplinary lens continues, helping students to understand ideas and concepts holistically. The text integrates the values we desire our students to develop, is rooted in the Indian cultural context and introduces global perspectives in an age-appropriate manner. For all practical purposes, it has, to my mind, succeeded in its curricular goals: first, to foster natural curiosity among students through a proper selection of content, and second, through a pedagogical approach in line with the recommendations of NCF-SE 2023.

However, in addition to this textbook, students at this stage should also be encouraged to explore various other learning resources. School libraries play a crucial role in making such resources available. Besides, the role of parents and teachers will also be invaluable in guiding and encouraging students to do so.

With this, I express my gratitude to all those who have been involved in the development of this textbook and hope that it will meet the expectations of all stakeholders. At the same time, I also invite suggestions and feedback from all its users for further improvement in the coming years.

October 2025
New Delhi

Dinesh Prasad Saklani

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

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Letter to the Student

Dear Student,

You have now entered the second half of Grade 7. We trust you have enjoyed engaging with Part 1 of the Social Science textbook. We now bring you Part 2 to continue our journey across the five themes — India and the World, Tapestry of the Past, Our Cultural Heritage and Knowledge Traditions, Governance and Democracy, and Economic Life Around Us — delving into new aspects. We urge you to continue to explore the maps and illustrations, participate in discussions with your friends and teachers, as well as carry out the activities described with support from your teachers and parents.

Look for the ways in which each theme brings together aspects from several disciplines — whether history, geography, political science or economics. This brings us closer to real life and helps us to better understand the events of today.

We have approached the creation of this book with the same love and care as the earlier ones. We hope you will enjoy discovering new horizons or figuring out an original answer to some of the challenging questions we sometimes like to throw at you!

As usual, in this textbook, every part of it — text, side boxes, images or maps — can be subject to evaluation and assessment. There are however four exceptions:

- *The quotation or quotations on the first pages of chapters.* Some are straightforward, others offer deep thought. Do not worry if you do not understand them at the first reading; they are meant to stimulate you or inspire you.
- *Wherever we have mentioned in the text, "You need not remember this".*
- *The diacritical signs on some Sanskrit words* — do look at 'Your journey through this book' in the next few pages to understand what we mean.
- *The Glossary* (at the end of the textbook).

No evaluation should bear on these four aspects.

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A note on the pronunciation of Sanskrit words

Since this textbook is in English, we use the Roman alphabet. But we will also encounter some words in Sanskrit and a few other Indian languages. The Roman alphabet cannot make their pronunciation clear without some additional marks or signs, such as dashes, dots or accents, called 'diacritical signs' or 'diacritics'. You can ignore all these signs if you wish, and you don't need to remember them. However, as we are using only a few simple signs, you will find it easy to get used to them. You will also find that they help you pronounce Sanskrit words fairly correctly.

Here is how they work:

- A short dash (called 'macron') over a vowel makes it long. For instance, *dāna* is pronounced 'daana'; *līlā* is pronounced 'leelaa'; *sūtra* is *sootra*.
- *śh* and *ṣh* are pronounced more or less as 'sh' in 'shall' (there is a slight difference, since they correspond to श and ष in the Devanagari script, but you can ignore it in practice). So *śhāstra* is pronounced 'shaastra'; *kṣhīra* is 'ksheera'.
- Consonants with a dot below them (*ḍ, ṭ* and *ṇ* mainly) are 'hard', i.e. pronounced by hitting the tongue on the palate; without a dot, they are soft, with the tongue on the teeth. (As a rough comparison, in the preceding English word 'teeth', the first 't' is hard, while the final 'th' is soft.) Examples of hard consonants: Āryabhaṭa, *gaṇa, paṭhana* (studying), *pīṭha, goṣṭhī* (association, assembly), *dhanāḍhya* (rich), *aṇu* (atom).
- Finally, ṛ is the Devanagari letter ऋ. We choose to write it as *ṛi*, although in some parts of India it is also pronounced as *ṛu*. So we write 'Ṛig Veda', for instance.

For those who wish to know the precise correspondence between the Devanagari alphabet and the Roman script in our system, the tables of short and long vowels are as follows:

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Devanagari	Roman script
अ	*a*
इ	*i*
उ	*u*
ऋ	*ṛi*
ए	*e*
ओ	*o*
Devanagari	**Roman script**
आ	*ā*
ई	*ī*
ऊ	*ū*
ॠ	*ṝi*
ऐ	*ai*
औ	*au*

And the table of consonants:

Guttural	क	ka	ख	kha	ग	ga	घ	gha	ङ	ṅa	ह	ha
Palatal	च	cha	छ	chha	ज	ja	झ	jha	ञ	ña	य	ya
Cerebral	ट	ṭa	ठ	ṭha	ड	ḍa	ढ	ḍha	ण	ṇa	र	ra
Dental	त	ta	थ	tha	द	da	ध	dha	न	na	ल	la
Labial	प	pa	फ	pha	ब	ba	भ	bha	म	ma	व	va
Sibilants	श	śha	ष	ṣha	स	sa						

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CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Part III (Articles 12 – 35)
(Subject to certain conditions, some exceptions
and reasonable restrictions)
guarantees these

Fundamental Rights

Right to Equality

- before law and equal protection of laws;
- irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth;
- of opportunity in public employment;
- by abolition of untouchability and titles.

Right to Freedom

- of expression, assembly, association, movement, residence and profession;
- of certain protections in respect of conviction for offences;
- of protection of life and personal liberty;
- of free and compulsory education for children between the age of six and fourteen years;
- of protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.

Right against Exploitation

- for prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour;
- for prohibition of employment of children in hazardous jobs.

Right to Freedom of Religion

- freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion;
- freedom to manage religious affairs;
- freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion;
- freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in educational institutions wholly maintained by the State.

Cultural and Educational Rights

- for protection of interests of minorities to conserve their language, script and culture;
- for minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

Right to Constitutional Remedies

- by issuance of directions or orders or writs by the Supreme Court and High Courts for enforcement of these Fundamental Rights.

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THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a [1]**[SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC]** and to secure to all its citizens :

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the [2][unity and integrity of the Nation];

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949 do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

---

1. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Sovereign Democratic Republic" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
2. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Unity of the Nation" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)

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Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam:

The whole world is family

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CHAPTER 1

The Story of Indian Farming

A farmer who looks after the welfare of his cattle, visits his farms daily, has the knowledge of the seasons, is careful about seeds, and is industrious, is rewarded with harvests of all kinds and never perishes.

Kṛiṣhi Parāśhara

Fig. 1.1. (1) Ploughing a field with a ploughshare pulled by oxen. (2) A farmer uses a tractor to plough the land. (3) Women transplanting rice seedlings. (4) Transplanting seedlings using a transplanter. (5) Separating wheat from the stalk using a threshing machine. (6) Transporting vegetables on the Dal Lake, Kashmir.

The Big Questions?

1. *What are the main characteristics of Indian agriculture?*
2. *How are farming, climate, soil, and water interrelated?*
3. *How can traditional practices and contemporary ones complement each other?*

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India's Agricultural Landscape

Farming or agriculture is one of the oldest occupations of humankind. It encompasses the preparation of soil, cultivation of plants, rearing of livestock, and, in many cases, the growing of trees as part of a comprehensive farming system. In some areas, farmers also practice pisciculture (fish rearing) or rear cocoons to extract silk thread. Very broadly, the term 'agriculture' encompasses farming, animal husbandry (raising livestock), forestry, and horticulture.

DON'T MISS OUT

The word agriculture comes from Latin. *Agri* means field and *culture* means to cultivate. The Government of India classifies economic activities related to agriculture as 'agriculture and allied activities'. Broadly, this includes agriculture, livestock-related activities, beekeeping (apiculture), fisheries, rearing of silkworms and preparing silk yarn, and fibre production, such as cotton and hemp.

A little over 18 per cent of the country's total value of goods and services produced in a year (gross domestic product) comes from agriculture and allied activities (2022-2023). Approximately 46 per cent of India's working population is engaged in agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood (2022-2023). A large proportion of families in India are closely connected to the land in one way or another, and in many cases, have been cultivating it for generations. Farming activities are, of course, essential for nurturing and sustaining the human population.

THINK ABOUT IT

When you read or hear the word 'farmer', what do you visualise? Many people imagine a man. However, in rural areas of India, more than 75 per cent of people working in the agriculture sector are women (2025). They perform most of the farming operations, from sowing to harvesting and **threshing.**

Threshing: Removing the edible grain from the straw or husk, manually or using a machine

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India's agricultural landscape is a vibrant blend of traditional and modern farming practices, with diverse crops and deep-rooted cultural traditions. From the golden wheat fields of Punjab, the saffron valley of Kashmir, the lush tea gardens of the Northeast or the Nilgiris to the emerald paddy fields of Kerala, agriculture has long been a fundamental part of the nation's identity.

LET'S EXPLORE

Create a list of the foods you typically eat. Identify the grains, pulses, oils, vegetables, and fruits in them. Now locate where you live on a physical map of India. (You may refer to the political map of India at the end of the book if you wish.) Which of the food items do you think grow in and around where you live? What do you think are the reasons that they are cultivated in your region? Which of them comes from other places? Why do you think they are not grown in your area?

You may have reasoned that growing crops is dependent on several factors — the soil, the climate, the availability of water, the terrain, and so on. The story of farming is, therefore, linked to these factors. We will look at some of these factors in this chapter. But before that, we need to go back a little in time...

Echoes from the Past

The story of Indian farming goes back to prehistory. Archaeological investigations have shown the presence of rice grains in the Ganga Plain as early as the 7th or 8th millennium BCE. Some experts have, however, pointed out that this need not mean that rice cultivation was already systematic; that may have taken a few more millennia to be mastered. At Mehrgarh (in Baluchistan, a site antecedent of the Sindhu-Sarasvatī civilisation), the cultivation of barley and millets is also dated to the 7th millennium BCE. Later, barley and wheat were the staple crops of the Harappans; several Harappan sites also point to the presence of rice in the 3rd millennium BCE, at least in some regions, apart from millets and several vegetables.

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Over time, farmers learned to cultivate oilseeds (such as sesame, safflower, linseed, mustard, and castor), legumes (green gram, black gram, and fenugreek), fibre crops (cotton, hemp, jute), more vegetables, and fruits (grapes, dates, jujube, jackfruit, mango, mulberry, and black plum).

DON'T MISS OUT

The Vedas also mention *yava* (barley), *godhūma* (wheat) and *vrīhi* (rice) as well as other crops such as sesame, black gram, and various types of pulses and legumes.

Intercropping: the practice of growing two or more different crops simultaneously

Fig. 1.2. (Top) **Intercropping** *at the Harappan site of Kalibangan (Rajasthan) around 2800 BCE, as evidenced by perpendicular furrows. (Bottom) The same practice continuing in the 1960s, around 4800 years later!*

Fig. 1.3. An example of intercropping: growing sugarcane along with pumpkin

This period also saw the domestication of animals. Cattle, asses, sheep, goats, dogs, pigs, fowl, and other animals were domesticated from the pre-urban phase of the Sindhu-Sarasvatī civilisation (c. 3500 BCE).

In the historical period, ancient Indian texts provide a wealth of information on agriculture. Kauṭilya's *Arthaśhāstra*, the Sangam literature of the early Tamils, *Amarakoṣha, Kṛiṣhiparāśhara*, Varāhamihira's *Bṛihatsamhitā*, and Surapāla's *Vṛikṣhāyurveda*, among others, contain writings on agriculture, horticulture, and plant biodiversity. Some texts also refer to the rearing and care of animals.

Surapāla's *Vṛikṣhāyurveda* provides recommendations on seed preparation, soil cultivation methods, planting techniques, and more. "Seeds sprinkled with milk, rubbed with cow dung, dried and profusely smeared with *maksika* (honey) and *bidanga* (false black pepper) definitely sprout." On watering of trees — "Newly planted trees in arid land should be watered every morning and evening for a period of fifteen days until the soil is fully soaked." Further recommendations include irrigation methods for other types of soils. The *Bṛihatsamhitā* describes a method of **grafting** still in use today.

From the types of plants, animals, soils, and climates to the methods of irrigation, we find a wealth of information about the knowledge and practices of our ancestors regarding agriculture in these texts.

Grafting: A technique that joins one plant with another to grow as a single plant enabling the combining of desirable traits like resistance to pests or sweetness of the fruit.

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Climate, Seasons, and Crops: What Grows Where and When?

India's varied geography and climate influence the variety of crops grown in different regions and at various times of the year. This section examines India's climatic diversity, the primary cropping seasons, and the pivotal role of monsoons in the country's agriculture.

In the words of Xuanzang, a Chinese pilgrim travelling in India in the 7th century (you will meet him later in this book), "The climate and the quality of the soil being different according to situation, the produce of the land is various in its character. The flowers and plants, the fruits and trees are different kinds, and have distinct names."

This was a sharp observation of India's climatic diversity. In Part 1 of this textbook, we introduced seven different types of climates in India.

LET'S REMEMBER

The types of climates in India are:

- → Alpine – the Himalayas
- → Temperate – the lower Himalayas
- → Subtropical – the northern plains
- → Arid – the Thar Desert
- → Tropical wet – western coastal strip
- → Semi-arid – central Deccan Plateau
- → Tropical – eastern India and the southern peninsula

Each of these areas receives different quantities of sunshine and rainfall, experiences variations in the temperatures across the seasons, and is affected differently by the monsoons.

India is divided into 15 agroclimatic zones. In simple terms, climate factors, different types of soil and terrain, and types of vegetation are combined to create these categories. This categorisation helps the government and other agencies identify

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and plan appropriate actions to improve agricultural production — what, when, and how to grow different crops. A few examples of agroclimatic zones are the Upper Gangetic Plain Region, Southern Plateau and Hills Region, and Western Dry Region.

The monsoon and agriculture

The Indian monsoon system is a key factor in the country's agricultural diversity. It brings rainfall, which is vital for many crops. India experiences the southwest monsoon and the northeast monsoon. (Refer to the chapter 'Climates of India' in Part 1 of this textbook.) The southwest monsoon brings rain from June to September. It is crucial for the seasonal growth of kharif crops in northern and central India. The northeast monsoon prevails from October to December. This brings rainfall to the east and south of India. Coastal regions, including the Malabar (Kerala) and Coromandel (Tamil Nadu) plains, receive rainfall from both the southwest and northeast monsoons.

The rain from these two monsoon periods enables farmers in the south to grow crops during the period in between; this is a dry season for farmers in north India who depend on other sources of water like groundwater, water from rivers, canals and ponds, and moisture retained in the soil, to ensure irrigation for their crops. States like Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh grow rice throughout the year on account of availability of water from the monsoon as well as irrigation.

Fig. 1.4. An irrigated crop of peanuts in south India

LET'S EXPLORE

Imagine that your state received less than normal monsoon rains for two consecutive years. Which items are likely to disappear from your meals, or are likely to become difficult to access?

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The rhythm of seasons and crops: kharif, rabi, and zaid

Indian agriculture is mainly divided into three cropping seasons: kharif, rabi, and zaid.

Farmers have been following this rhythm for centuries. A wide variety of agricultural products becomes available throughout the year. This rhythm is one of the factors that ensures food supply for the people. The terms kharif, rabi, and zaid are of Arabic origin and have been in use since the Mughal times.

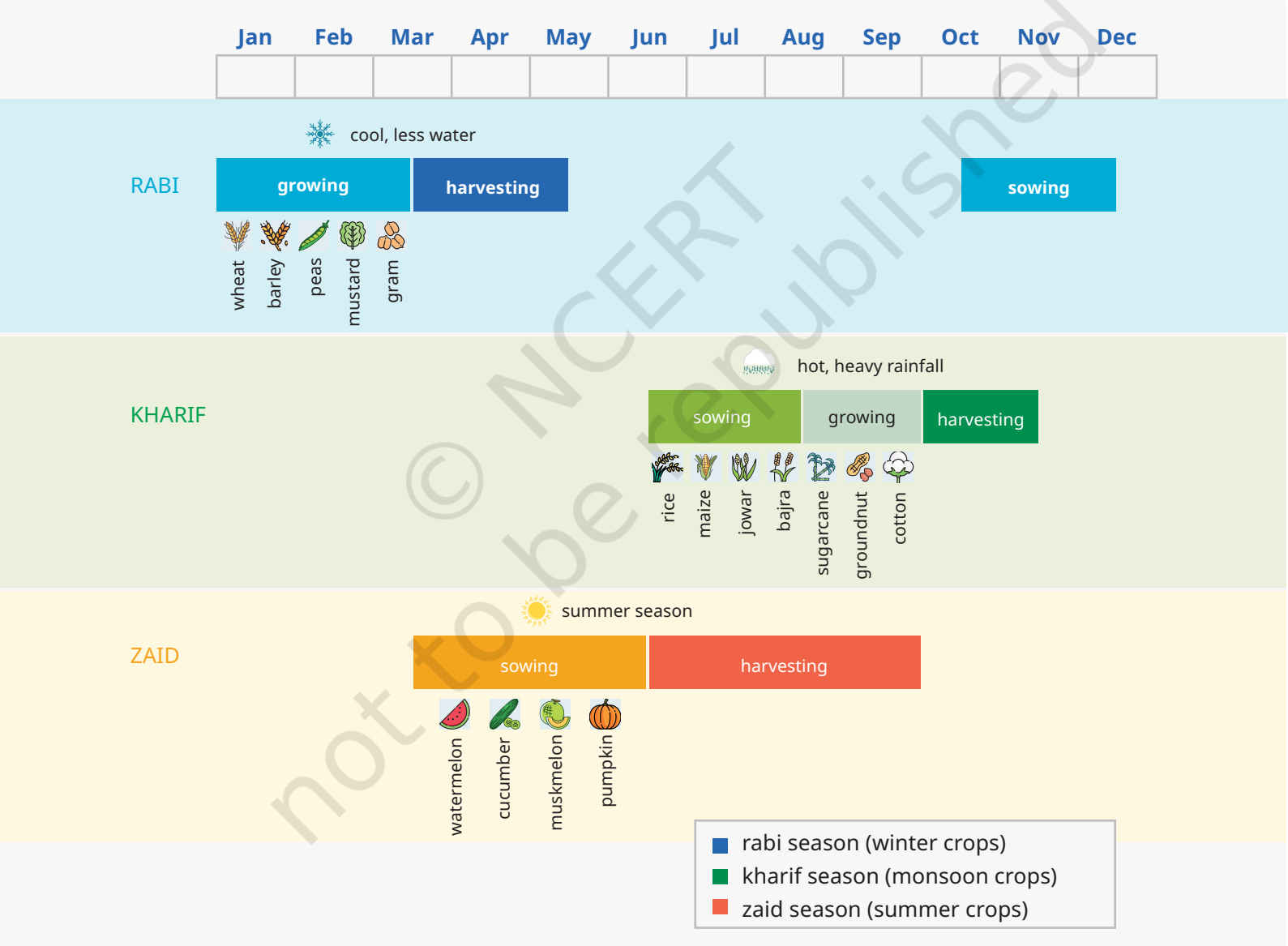

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Fig. 1.5. Kharif, rabi, and zaid crops and seasons in most parts of India

DON'T MISS OUT

Before the Arabic terms for the three types of crops became more widely used, they were called *kedāra* (wet crops), *haimana* (winter crops), and *graiṣhmika* (summer crops).

Each of these crop seasons presents its own unique challenges as well. For example, the kharif crops are dependent on the timely arrival of the monsoons. Excessive rainfall also leads to the destruction of crops, causing significant distress to farmers and their families in particular.

LET'S EXPLORE

Prepare a list of the crops that are cultivated in your state or union territory in a year and classify them into kharif, rabi, and zaid.

Fig. 1.6. Rabi crops of mustard (in the foreground) and wheat (in the background)

Fig. 1.7. Pearl millet, a kharif crop

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DON'T MISS OUT

The *Arthaśhāstra* contains sections on agriculture, including the preparation of land and seeds, as well as payment to farmers and other relevant topics. "A good rainy season is one when one-third of the annual rainfall occurs at the beginning (*Śhrāvaṇa* — July-August) and at the end of the season (*Kārtika* — October-November), and two-thirds in the middle (*Prauṣhṭhapada* — August-September and *Āśhvayuja* — September-October)." Why do you think this statement was made? *(Hint: Did it have anything to do with the crop cycle?)*

Humus: Humus is the dark organic matter in soil that is formed by the decomposition of plant and animal matter. It is rich in nutrients and retains moisture in the soil. Humus is the Latin word for 'earth' or 'soil'.

Soil, the Foundation of Cultivation

Soil is the thin, upper layer of the Earth's crust that supports plant life. It is formed over millions of years through the breakdown of rocks and the decay of organic matter. It's the most essential resource for farmers, as it provides the necessary nutrients, water, and support for crops to grow. This section examines the various soils found in the Indian subcontinent and their associations with specific crops.

How is soil formed?

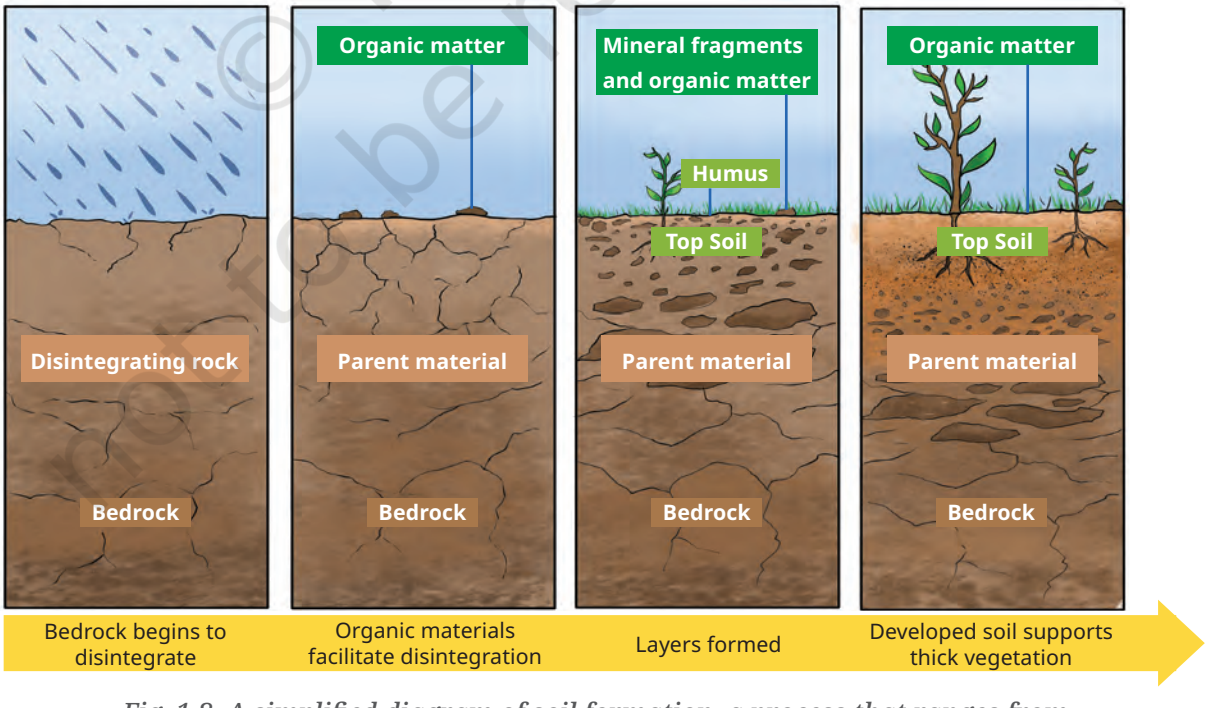

Fig. 1.8. A simplified diagram of soil formation, a process that ranges from a century to several millennia

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Soils of India

India has a diverse range of soil types, each with its distinct properties. Ancient texts, such as the *Amarakoṣha*, describe twelve types of agricultural land based on soil fertility. Today, we classify the soils of India into six major types: alluvial soil, black soil, red soil, laterite soil, desert soil, and mountain / alpine soil.

LET'S EXPLORE

- → Try to name at least two states in each of the zones mentioned above.
- → Which type of soil is predominantly found in your state or union territory?
- → Soils tell us stories about places — what might have happened over thousands of years during which the soils were being formed. Take a few samples of soil from your neighbourhood. Look carefully at them. (Examine the soil using a magnifying glass or microscope if you have access to either.) What do the samples consist of? What might be the origins of the soil? Are there signs of human activity that you notice? What might happen to the soil over time on account of this?

Soil-crop linkages

In addition to the agroclimatic conditions that we briefly saw above, crops are also strongly influenced by the type of soil where they grow.

LET'S EXPLORE

- → Take up a small group project. Identify the types of vegetables, fruits, and trees that grow in the different soil types.
- → Create a family food flowchart that connects your favourite dishes to the different crops they are prepared from and the corresponding soil types in which they are cultivated.

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Weathering: Refers to the process by which rocks and minerals are broken down into soil particles through physical, chemical, or biological means.

Silt: A fine-grained, dust-like sediment composed of rock and mineral particles that are larger than clay but smaller than sand. As a result, they are easily transported by rivers from the mountains to the plains.

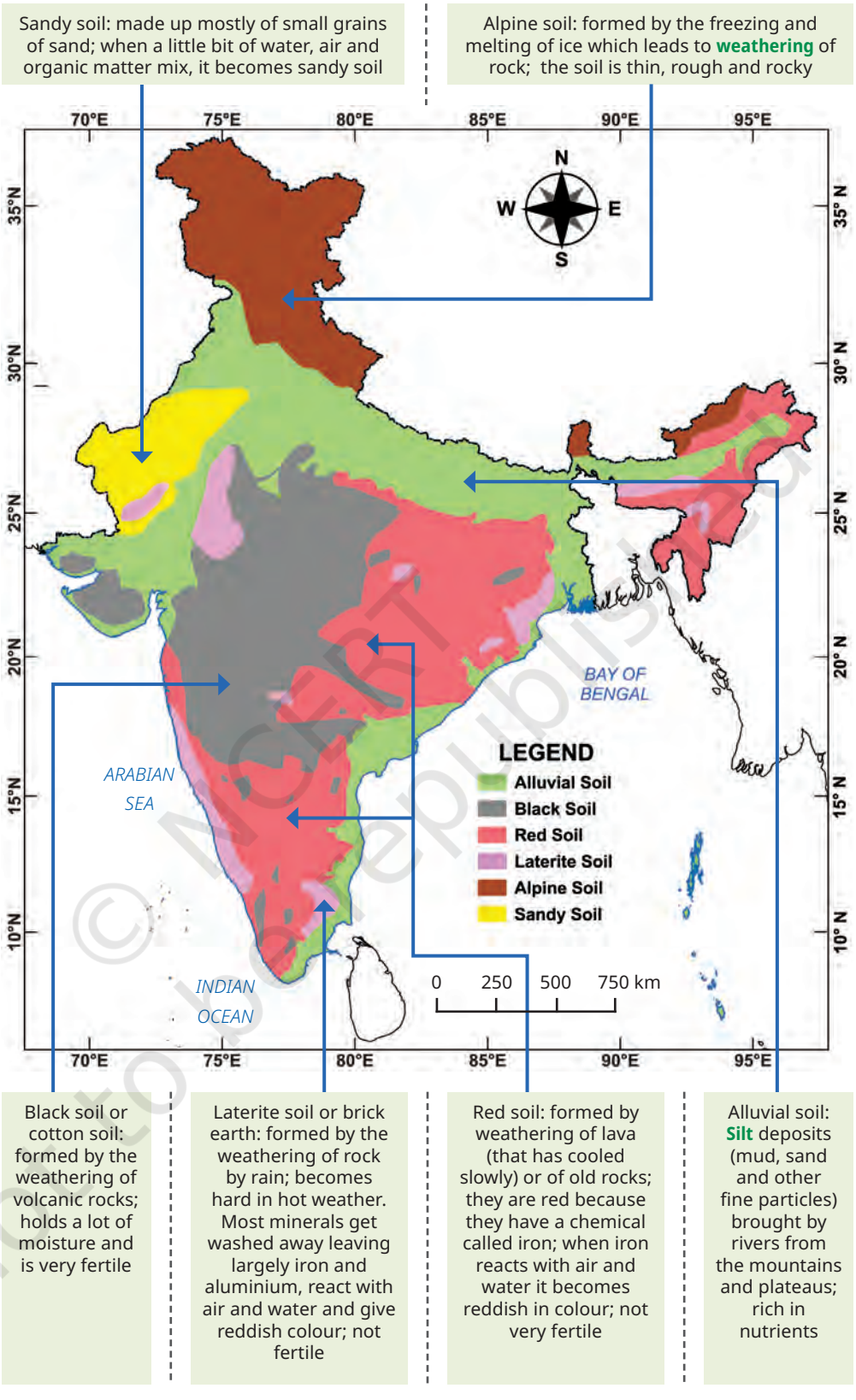

Fig. 1.9. A simplified map of the major soil types of India and their formation. Most regions will have local variations.

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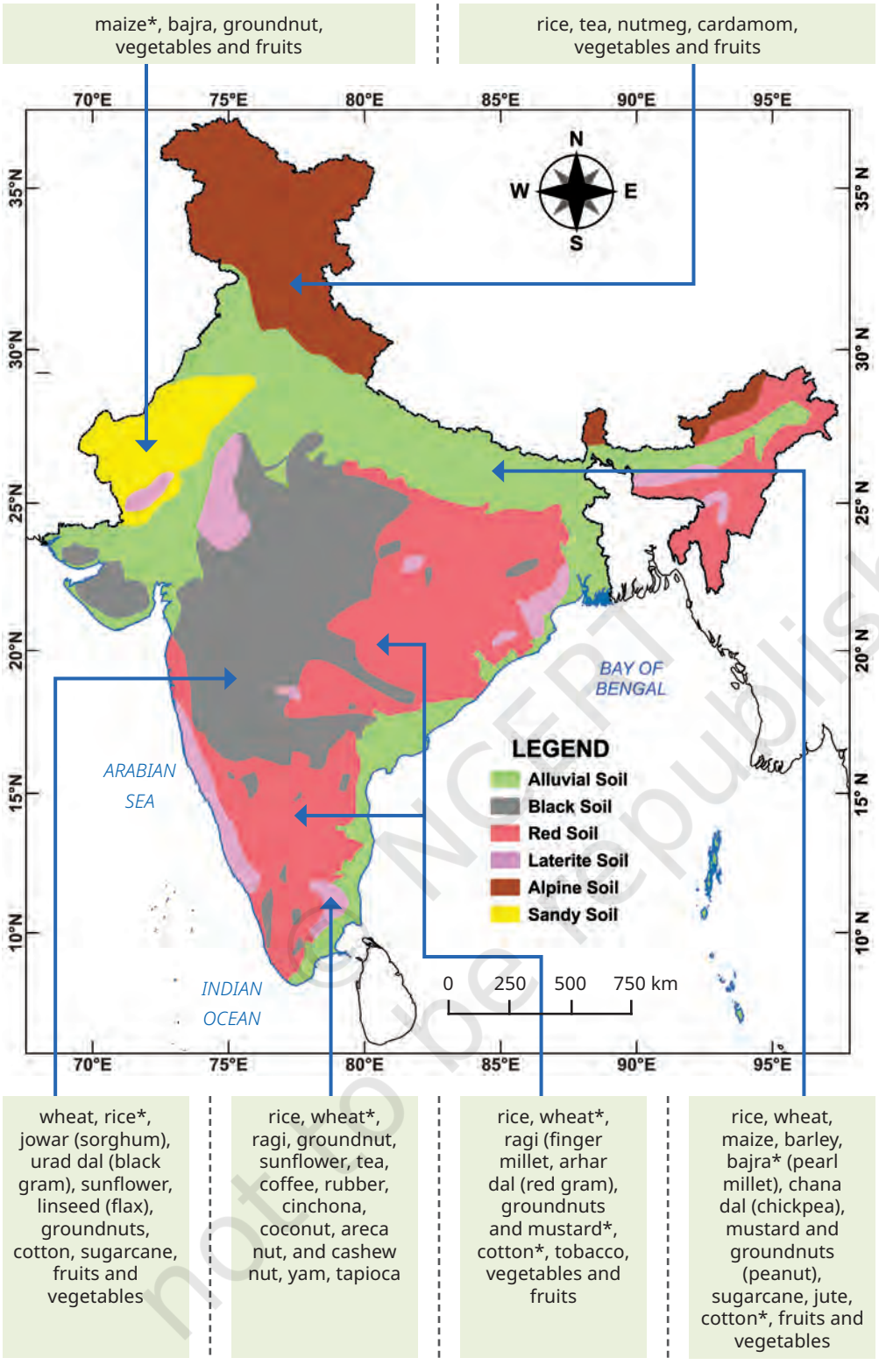

These crops are not here on the ideal soil for their cultivation, but can be grown with efficient irrigation.

Fig. 1.10. Some examples of crops grown in the different soil-type areas (You need not remember all these details)

Bedrock: Bedrock refers to the original rock from which new rocks and soils are derived through weathering, erosion, and other processes.

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Nurturing the soil

Healthy soil is crucial for a good harvest. Soil is a complex ecosystem with organisms like bacteria, fungi, earthworms, and insects. It has minerals, organic matter (humus), water, and air. The organisms break down the organic material and improve the health of the soil enabling it to sustain healthy plants. To maintain its health and fertility, farmers use various **soil conservation** techniques.

Soil conservation: It refers to the practice of managing soil to prevent its degradation and preserve its productivity.

- **Traditional methods:** Our ancestors employed numerous ingenious techniques to protect the soil. **Crop rotation** is one such method, where different types of crops are grown in the same field in different seasons to prevent the soil from losing specific nutrients. Equally important was **multiple cropping** where multiple crops were grown in the same field. This reduced the risk of pests and also ensured at least one crop. The crops were chosen in such a way that there would be periodic harvests from the same field. Another practice is **contour ploughing**, which involves ploughing along the natural curves of a hill slope to avoid soil erosion from rainwater. Farmers also used **organic fertilisers,** such as cow dung, to replenish the soil's nutrients.

DON'T MISS OUT

Did you know that *panchagavya* is a fermented mixture of five cow products: dung, urine, milk, curd, and ghee? Recent studies have shown that it acts as a biofertiliser, enhancing crop growth and productivity while increasing their resistance to diseases.

- **Contemporary approaches:** Today, modern techniques such as terracing are used in hilly areas to create flat steps for farming, which slows down water runoff and reduces soil erosion. Afforestation, or planting trees, is another method that helps to prevent soil erosion. Some traditional methods like mulching, ploughing back crop residue, are still practised by farmers today. Very precise application of fertilisers enables their efficient use and also maintains soil health.

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Fig. 1.11. Banana trees on the bunds of these paddy fields serve as windbreakers, hold the soil in place, and also provide another crop to the farmers.

Fig. 1.12. A drone being used to assess soil moisture in a **greenhouse**.

Greenhouse: A transparent covered structure made of glass or plastic that captures sunlight and heat for the growth of plants in a controlled environment.

Water: Rain-Fed vs. Irrigated Agriculture

Water is a fundamental resource for agriculture. Without it, crops cannot grow. The availability of water is a significant factor that determines how farming is done in different parts of India. This section examines two primary types of irrigation practices: rain-fed and irrigated.

a. Rain-fed agriculture

Rain-fed agriculture refers to farming practices that rely entirely on rainfall. This type of farming is common in areas that receive sufficient rain during the monsoon season. However, farmers

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who are dependent on rainfall face numerous challenges, including droughts and unpredictable monsoons. To cope with these challenges, they have developed various adaptations, such as choosing drought-resistant crops or utilising traditional water-harvesting techniques.

b. Irrigated agriculture

Irrigated agriculture uses artificial methods to supply water to crops. This type of irrigation is crucial for enhancing farm productivity and reducing reliance on monsoon rains.

The history of irrigation in India is very long. Right from the time of the Indus civilisation, various water structures have been built in India. Throughout the country, a rich vocabulary

Fig. 1.13. The Munsar Lake at Viramgam (Gujarat), like many lakes in Indian cities, is an artificial one; it was constructed by Minaldevi, a queen of the Chaulukya dynasty in the 11th century CE. Its banks are dotted with small shrines and a few bigger temples, as a reminder that water bodies have been regarded as sacred.

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of water structures developed, such as *kull, kund, ahar, pokhar, khadin, arakere, koḷam, surangam, taḍāgam,* and *eri,* to name a few.

Some **traditional irrigation systems** include *phad* systems, and bamboo drip irrigation. Farmers also create small ponds that collect rainwater and provide moisture to the soil for a longer period of time.

Fig. 1.14. Bamboo irrigation system used in northeast India

- ***Phad* systems** are community-based irrigation systems, particularly found in the state of Maharashtra. These systems use small canals to divert river water to fields.
- **Bamboo drip irrigation** is practised in parts of northeastern India. Here, farmers traditionally use bamboo pipes to channel water from springs to their fields.

LET'S REMEMBER

In Part 1 of this textbook, you became familiar with *Kallanai,* the grand anicut, built by Karikāla across the Kaveri River about 1,800 years ago. It is a massive and effective water-diverting structure that irrigates thousands of hectares of land.

Over time, irrigation has evolved from simple systems to more advanced ones. Modern irrigation techniques include drip and sprinkler irrigation.

- **Drip irrigation**, also known as trickle irrigation, delivers water slowly and directly to the plant's roots through a network of tubes and emitters.

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THINK ABOUT IT

Imagine a network of small pipes with tiny holes placed near the base of your plants. These pipes are connected to a water source, and when the water is turned on, it drips slowly and steadily from the holes, watering only the roots. This targeted delivery ensures that water is used efficiently, minimising waste.

Fig. 1.15. Drip irrigation to reach water efficiently to plants

- **Sprinkler irrigation** sprays water into the air, which falls over the crops like artificial rain.

Fig. 1.16. Sprinklers in a wheat field

These modern methods help in using water more efficiently. This is very necessary as in many parts of India, groundwater reserves are fast decreasing. The evolution of irrigation has had a significant impact on India's agricultural landscape, enabling farming even in areas with low rainfall. It has helped to increase crop yields and ensure a more stable food supply for the country.

Seeds

One key component of farming is seeds. Seeds have been passed down in families from generation to generation, preserved at the community level, and shared. In some areas women also carry them as part of the gifts they bring to their marital home. High-yielding seeds were carefully selected and preserved for use during the next planting season.

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The *Arthaśhāstra* provides instructions for preparing seeds of various varieties for planting. For example, cotton seeds are to be smeared with cow dung. Cereals, beans, and pulses are to be soaked in dew for a certain number of days and then sun-dried before being planted. Sugarcane was to be smeared at the cut with a mixture of honey, ghee, lard, and covered with cow dung.

The Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed methods for the use of a paste called *beejamrit* made of cow dung and urine, combined with other materials, to coat seeds before planting. This protects seeds from being spoilt and also reduces germination time.

DON'T MISS OUT

The Indian seed drill is an ingenious invention of ancient Indian farmers. These seed drills combined soil preparation, seed planting, and the closing of the furrow in one operation. This reduced the labour involved in what would have been a three-step operation.

Today, an increasing number of farmers purchase seeds from various companies. These seeds are developed using scientific processes that provide higher yields and are pest-resistant. However, often the seeds that the plant later produces are not suitable for planting in the next season. This has drawn criticism because it creates a dependency of farmers on these seed companies.

Agricultural Practices: Traditional Wisdom and Modern Innovations

Over the centuries, Indian farmers have developed numerous farming methods. Some of these are based on ancient knowledge and traditions, while others are modern techniques that use contemporary technology. Many farmers use a combination of methods.

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Traditional farming systems

Traditional agriculture considers the plant and the soil (including the whole soil ecosystem) as a complete system. The soil is considered to be the primary source of nutrients, along with other sources of plant nutrients supplied in the form of farmyard manure. The bacteria, fungi, etc. in the soil help to convert the nutrients in the soil into forms that are easily taken up by the plants. The plants, in turn, support the growth of these organisms by supplying energy to them through their roots.

Fig. 1.17. Terrace farming in Uttarakhand

Traditional farming typically involves small-scale, resource-reliant methods that are closely tied to the environment. Terrace farming is an example. This is a method used on hilly slopes. Farmers cut steps or terraces into the hillside to create flat land for agriculture, which helps to prevent soil erosion and conserve water.

ICAR has documented almost 5000 traditional practices and tested over a hundred of them. It has been found that over 85 per cent of these practices were validated by modern science and could be applied to reduce the use of chemicals and enhancing soil health.

DON'T MISS OUT

Traditional farming systems are usually aligned with natural cycles, such as the *ṛitu chakra* (cycle of seasons), and often rely on family involvement and domestic animals. Examples include *kulāgar* and *gokṛiṣhi*.

- ***Kulāgar:*** This term comes from the Konkani words *'kula'* meaning 'family' and *'āgar'* meaning 'storehouse'. It is a traditional homestead farming system where families cultivate a variety of crops, including food crops, cash

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crops, fruits, vegetables, spices, and medicinal plants, around their homes by designing a structured irrigated system. This practice is common in the Konkan Plains (Goa) of India.

- ***Gokṛiṣhi:*** This is a holistic method in which cows provide manure, which is used as organic fertiliser, and bullocks are used to plough the fields.

Contemporary agriculture

Fig. 1.18. M.S. Swaminathan, architect of the Green Revolution, recipient of Bharat Ratna

Contemporary agriculture is characterised by modern farming methods that use technology, machinery, and new farming techniques. A significant turning point was the **Green Revolution** in the 1960s and 1970s. This movement introduced:

- high-yielding varieties (HYV) of seeds,
- increased irrigation,
- chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and
- mechanised equipment, among others.

This revolution led to a significant increase in food grain production, particularly of wheat and rice, and India achieved self-sufficiency in food. Modern farms started using tractors, harvesters, and other machinery to make work faster and easier. Since then, agriculture has emerged as the 'backbone of the Indian economy'.

Fig. 1.19. Stamp released to mark the revolution in wheat production in India. Note the bar graph in the stamp.

Over the last few decades, the limits of the approach and methods of the Green Revolution have become visible — the long-term impoverishment of the soil, depletion of groundwater, contamination of the soil and water by pesticides and fertilisers, damage to human and animal health (including

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multiplication of cancer cases in rural areas, as many scientific studies have established), among others. More and more agricultural scientists the world over question the sustainability of this type of agriculture.

Sustainable pathways

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in combining the productivity of modern methods with the wisdom of traditional practices to create sustainable agriculture. This approach is inspired by Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and focuses on environment-friendly, long-lasting farming practices. One example is the resurgence of organic farming, which avoids the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Instead, it relies on natural fertilisers, such as compost, seed cake (residue after oil has been extracted from seeds) and manure from animal sources. Another example is the use of neem-based pesticides, which are natural and much less harmful to the environment than chemical ones.

DON'T MISS OUT

Sikkim is the world's first 100 per cent organic state. It adopted an organic farming model for sustainable agriculture by banning in 2014 chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and focusing on natural farming practices. (We visited Sikkim in Part 1 of this textbook.)

LET'S EXPLORE

Identify modern agricultural solutions inspired by traditional practices (for example., neem-based practices).

When comparing traditional and modern methods, a trade-off is evident. Modern techniques, such as those from the Green Revolution, are highly productive and can produce a substantial amount of food quickly. However, as we saw above, the Green

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Revolution has not been without long term harmful effects. The use of chemicals pollutes water sources (they dissolve and enter water), and disrupts the ecosystem by harming important creatures like bees which are so necessary for pollination. Traditional methods, on the other hand, are often more resilient and sustainable because they work in harmony with Nature; however, they may yield lower results. The challenge today is to find a balance between the two — using modern innovations to meet our food needs while also adopting the sustainable practices of our ancestors.

DON'T MISS OUT

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has recognised three globally significant agricultural heritage systems in India. The farming of saffron in Kashmir, the traditional agricultural systems of Odisha that integrate forest management, and the below-sea-level agricultural methods in Kerala, which includes crop plantation and fishing.

Fig. 1.20. (1) A field of crocus flowers that yields saffron, Kashmir. (2) Integrated forest and land-based agricultural system, Odisha. (3) Integrated paddy farming in saline water, fishing, and rearing livestock, Kerala.

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DON'T MISS OUT

If you thought that soil is absolutely essential for growing plants, think again. Hydroponics is a method by which plants are grown in nutrient-rich water solutions; essential minerals are given directly to the roots. It is used in controlled environments, making it an option for urban farming and areas with poor soil quality.

Fig. 1.21. Vegetables being grown using hydroponics

The Role of the Government

In many states, the government has a support system to help farmers access seeds, fertilisers and pesticides, information on the weather forecast, research and training on new farming practices, and so on.

The government also provides electricity for irrigation at lower prices, to reduce input costs. Farmers can access financial assistance through schemes for crop insurance like the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana. Finally, the government purchases important crops from farmers to ensure that they have no difficulty marketing their produce and get fair prices.

Fig. 1.22. An example of a government insurance scheme for farmers

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The promotion of cold storages, and better access to information and markets through the use of digital technology, enable farmers to get better prices for their produce. (Refer to the chapter 'Understanding Markets' in Part 1 of this textbook.)

LET'S EXPLORE

Listen to the special programmes for farmers on the radio or watch a programme on television for a few days. Write down carefully the information that is shared through these mediums. Make a short report on the categories of information you gathered as well as questions that came to your mind during this activity.

Challenges

Indian farmers face several challenges. One of them has been the decreasing size of **landholding** as land gets divided among family members over generations. The average landholding is approximately three-fourths of a **hectare**; this is about the size of an average football field.

Landholding: An area of land that a person owns

Hectare: 1 hectare = 10,000 square metres. (The old unit of an acre, about 4047 square metres, is still widely in use in India.)

Farmers with small landholdings are not able to earn much income. It is also difficult for farmers to use tractors and other machines on their farms — the machines are designed for larger farms and are expensive to buy or rent, although of late machines have been designed and invented for small farms too.

Traditionally, families in farming have different sources of income beyond the crops they grow. They rear cows, goats, poultry, practise apiculture or fishing, and so on. Where possible, they collect forest produce. Many grow trees on the bunds for fruit and timber. Diversity builds resilience. However, today this is proving to be inadequate to provide a decent quality of life to farmers.

Farmers also face one of the biggest challenges of our time, climate change. With increasing unpredictability of weather patterns (for instance, untimely rains), and more frequent extreme events (such as severe droughts or heavy rainfall),

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farmers face a higher risk of crop destruction, leading at times to heavy losses. This trend is likely to get worse as our planet gets rapidly warmer.

THINK ABOUT IT

With its rich alluvial soil, for millennia the Ganga basin has been a source of food and water to millions of people — over 500 million today. Yet, for some years, the Ganga river has been under stress and is increasingly unable to replenish itself; parts of it are no longer navigable in summer as the water level is too low even for river boats.

The causes are multiple: global warming is causing Himalayan glaciers to melt at an unprecedented rate; much water is diverted to irrigation; agriculture and industry pump out huge amounts of groundwater; and hundreds of dams interfere with the river's natural flow. Solutions exist, but if this condition of Ganga persists, agriculture in its basin may become less and less sustainable, threatening the livelihood of millions and India's food production.

Such challenges and a few more have often led farmers to take loans in times of hardship, only to find that paying those loans back was difficult and catching them in a debt trap. As a result, many farmers — as many as 2,300 every day, according to some estimates — have been compelled to abandon agriculture. With new approaches such as those described in this chapter, there is hope that agriculture will eventually flourish in every part of India.

Before we move on ...

- Indian agriculture blends traditional and modern methods, involving crops, livestock, forestry, and more.
- Agriculture in India is connected with its diverse climates and the monsoons, with three cropping seasons: kharif, rabi, and zaid.
- Six major soil types influence which crops are grown. Soil health is key to flourishing and sustainable farming.

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- Seeds are passed down traditionally or bought as high-yield varieties from companies. This sometimes creates dependence on companies for seeds.
- Sustainable farming combines modern technology with eco-friendly practices, such as efficient irrigation.
- Farmers face challenges like small landholdings, climate change, non-affordability of modern equipment, and market challenges.
- The government helps through access to information, research and training, as well as different types of financial support.

Questions and activities

1. Why do farmers in Kerala grow rice while farmers in Punjab grow mostly wheat? What would happen if they swapped?
2. Match the following:

Column A	Column B
(a) Kharif crops	(i) Crops during the winter
(b) Rabi crops	(ii) Crops grown during the monsoon
(c) Alluvial soil	(iii) Thin, rough, and rocky soil found in mountainous regions
(d) Terrace farming	(iv) Crops grown in summer
(e) Alpine soil	(v) Soil rich in nutrients deposited by rivers
(f) Zaid crops	(vi) Method of farming on hillsides

3. Why do certain crops thrive in specific regions?

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4. How has modern technology helped farmers?
5. Why is sustainable agriculture important? Write a short note on this.
6. Name some challenges that farmers face today. What might be their impact for people?
7. Have a debate in class on the topic “Traditional irrigation methods are better than modern ones.”
8. Write a short essay describing what farming might be like when you are 60 years old. You could also draw / paint a picture to illustrate what you envision.
9. Form small groups and discuss the issues affecting the Ganga basin. Prepare a presentation proposing your solutions and their rationale (your reasons). Share and discuss in class. Your teacher will guide you in this exercise.
10. Looking at the crops listed in the section ‘Echoes from the Past’, which ones do you find in use in your home? What conclusion can you draw from your observations?

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CHAPTER 2

India and Her Neighbours

Our destinies are inextricably tied together. What affects one nation affects the rest of us.

— Nelson Mandela (1995)

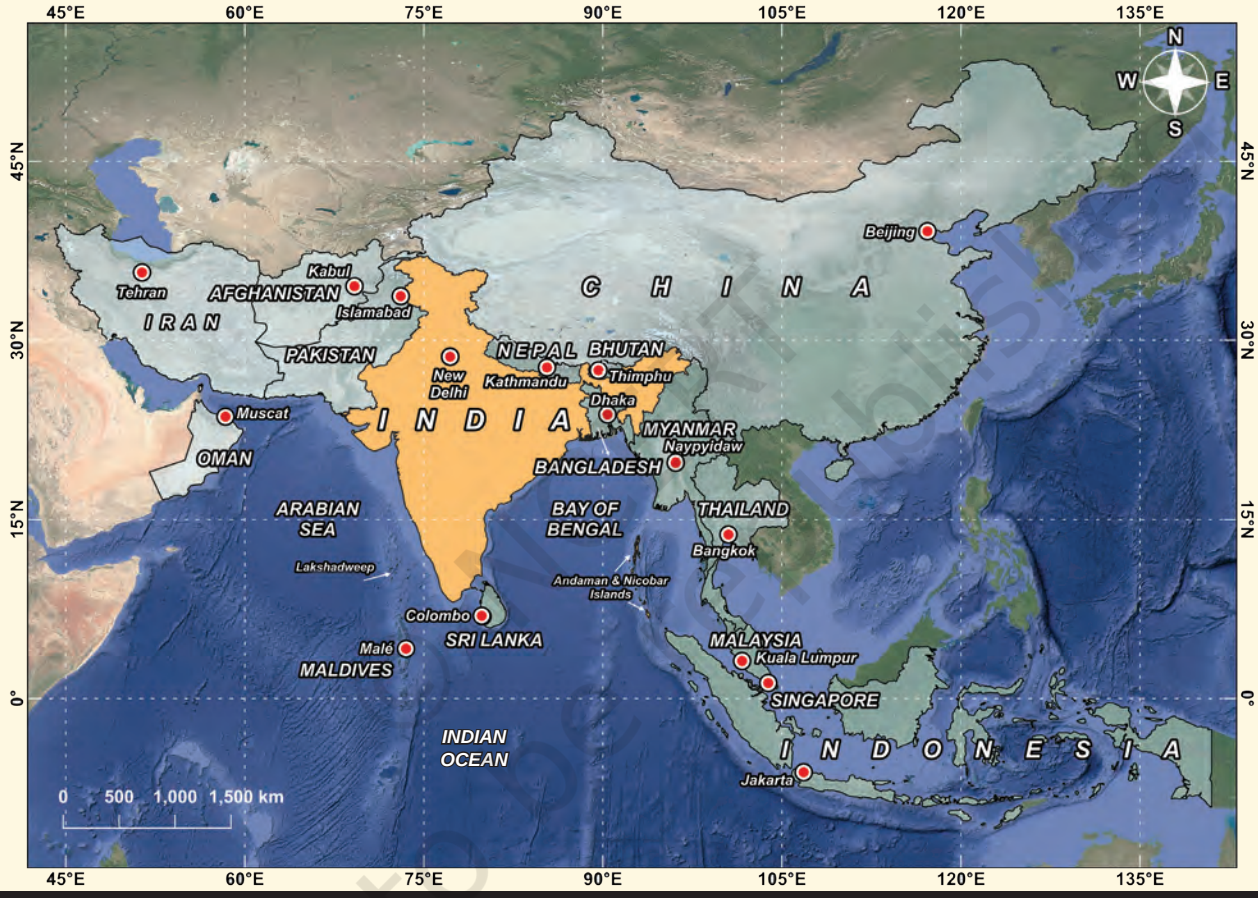

Fig. 2.1. India and some of her neighbours

The Big Questions?

1. *What defines a 'neighbour'? Is it just shared land borders?*
2. *How do geography and history influence the nature of India's relationships with her neighbours?*
3. *In what ways are India and her neighbours interconnected today?*

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Framing the Neighbourhood

When we think of a neighbour, we often imagine a country that shares a land boundary with us. That is the traditional view of neighbourhood. In that sense, Pakistan and Afghanistan in the northwest, China's region of Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan in the north, and Bangladesh and Myanmar in the east are indeed our neighbours. India's total land boundary stretches over 15,100 km and passes through diverse landscapes, including deserts, plains, forests, mountains, marshes, and river valleys.

India, however, has always been a maritime nation, surrounded by the sea on three sides. This makes Sri Lanka and the Maldives our immediate neighbours across the waters. But if we look at India from a high-altitude satellite, we can also see that nations like Iran, Oman, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia are part of our maritime neighbourhood. In this chapter, we use this understanding of a wider neighbourhood to situate India's central and strategic place in South Asia (Fig. 2.1).

DON'T MISS OUT

Who is a **maritime neighbour**?

A maritime neighbour is a country connected to another by a shared sea or ocean, even without a direct land border. *(Revisit the chapter 'Oceans and Continents' in your Grade 6 textbook.)* The ocean acts as a vital link, facilitating centuries of trade, cultural exchange, and historical ties. In this chapter, we will visit only the maritime neighbours nearest to India.

LET'S EXPLORE

Identify the three large water bodies that surround India in the map on the facing page (Fig.2.2).

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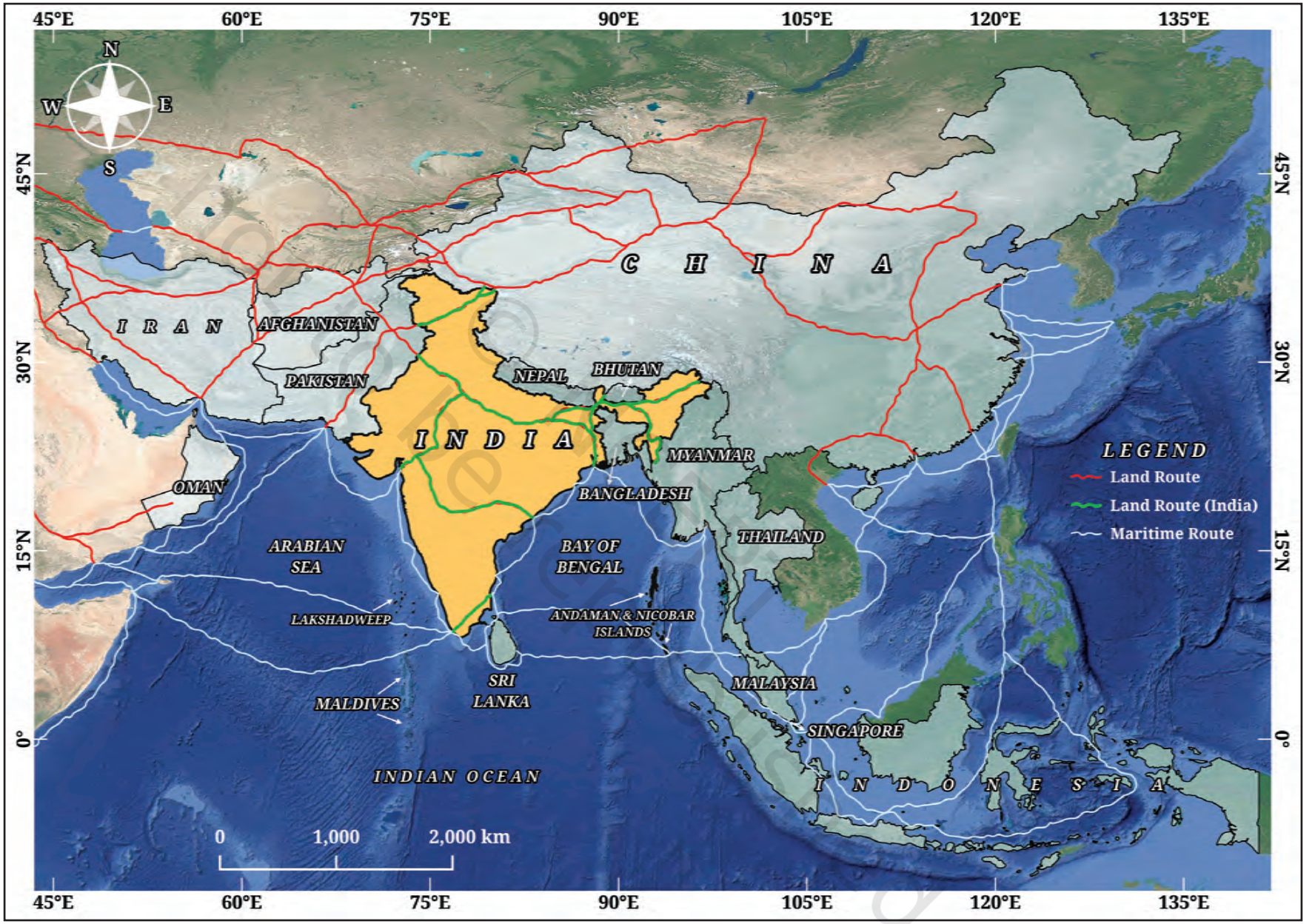

Fig. 2.2. A simplified map of the major land and sea routes that have connected India with many regions and countries of Eurasia and Africa over the centuries. (The routes shown here are approximate and fluctuated in time.)

DON'T MISS OUT

The Indian Ocean is the third-largest ocean in the world and is a busy route where half of the world's container ships, one third of the bulk cargo, and two-thirds of the world's oil are transported. This ocean connects many countries, which are home to around 2.7 billion people.

With a long coastline of approximately 11,100 km, India holds a unique maritime position. Her peninsular shape extends deep into the Indian Ocean — a location that provides India with access to important sea routes, making her a vital link between Southeast Asia, West Asia, and Africa. This has allowed India to play a key role in trade and regional cooperation. India's ports serve as gateways for imports and exports, and her central position helps in providing timely humanitarian aid and disaster relief in the region.

Such involvement is called **regionalism** and helps create peace, stability, and shared progress. It teaches us that being good neighbours is not just about borders, but also about working together for the benefit of everyone in the region. See the map in Fig. 2.2 to get a sense of the dense networks of land and sea routes connecting India with many regions in this part of the world.

India and Her Land-based Neighbours

India and her largest neighbour

Since 1950, India and **China**, two of Asia's largest and most influential nations, have shared a long and strategic relationship shaped by history, geography, culture, trade, and politics. Separated by the Himalayas, their border stretches (from east to west) across the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and the Union Territory of Ladakh.

Culturally, Buddhism is a powerful link between the two countries. Originating in India, it reached China around the 1st century CE via trade and pilgrimage routes. A few centuries later, Chinese monks like Faxian and Xuanzang travelled to Indian centres of

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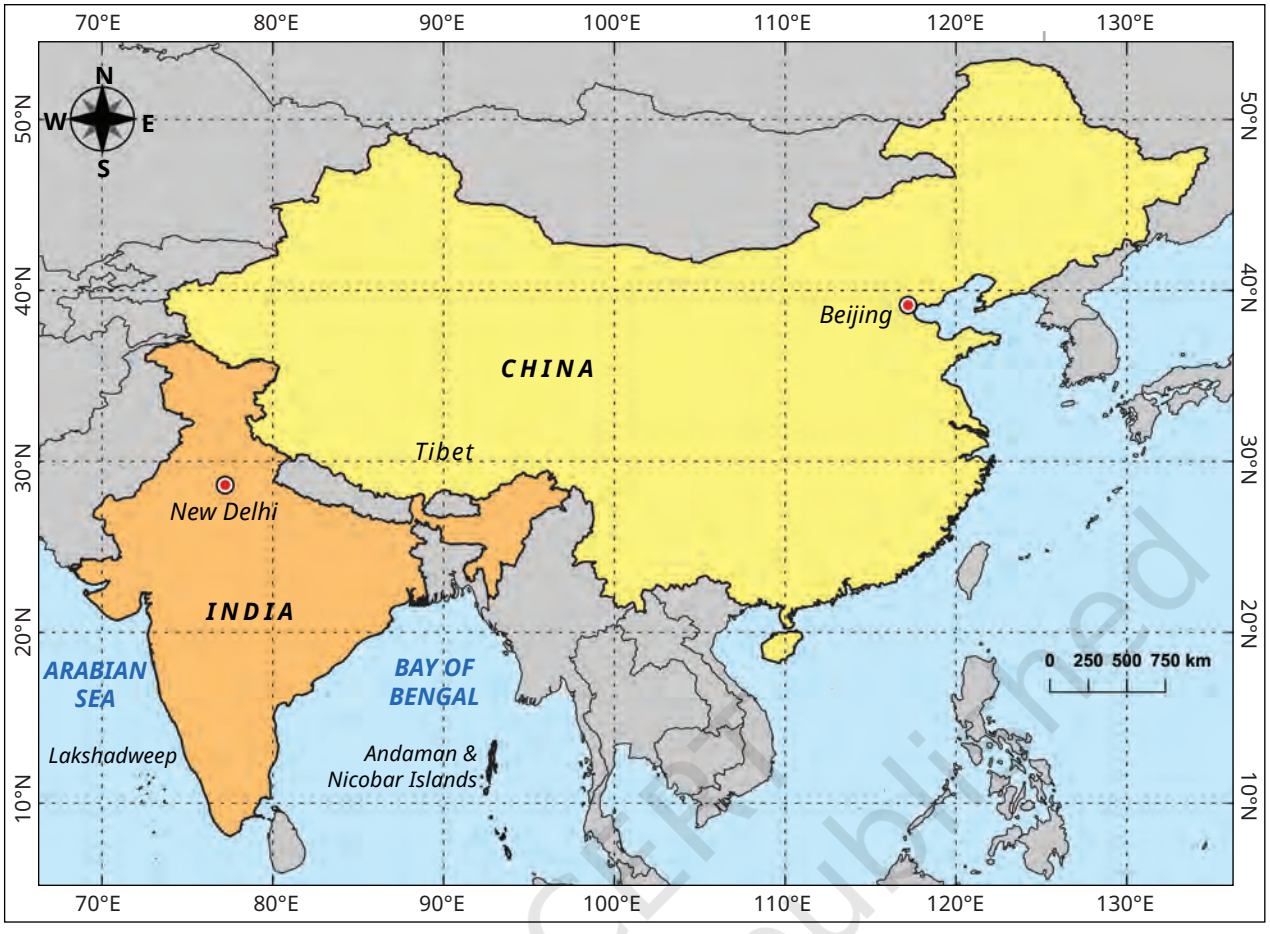

Fig. 2.3. India and China. (Note that China is approximately three times larger than India in area.)

learning, while Indian monks such as Bodhidharma, Dharmakṣhema and Kumārajīva carried Buddhist teachings to China, creating deep spiritual and intellectual ties.

DON'T MISS OUT

In the 13th century, Hindu merchants built temples in the Chinese port city of Quanzhou, an important trading centre. At the Kaiyuan temple, pillars depict carvings of Viṣhṇu, Śhiva, and stories from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Purāṇas.

Fig. 2.4. 'Gajendra mokṣham' or the story of Viṣhṇu rescuing the elephant from a crocodile, carved on a pillar at the Kaiyuan temple

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India's trade relationship with China continues till date. In 2024-2025, India's chief exports to China were iron ore, chemicals, and cotton yarn; the imports include electronic items (including mobile phones, computer hardware, etc.), and a variety of industrial equipment. Several Indian companies have set up operations in China and vice versa. However, the balance of trade is currently much in China's favour, since her exports to India are worth about eight times more than India's exports to China.

Recent years have also seen phases of heightened tensions, mostly related to their shared borders, and a few serious conflicts, some of which you will encounter in higher classes. On the other hand, efforts are being made to resolve disputes through trade, dialogue and border resolution mechanisms.

India and Pakistan

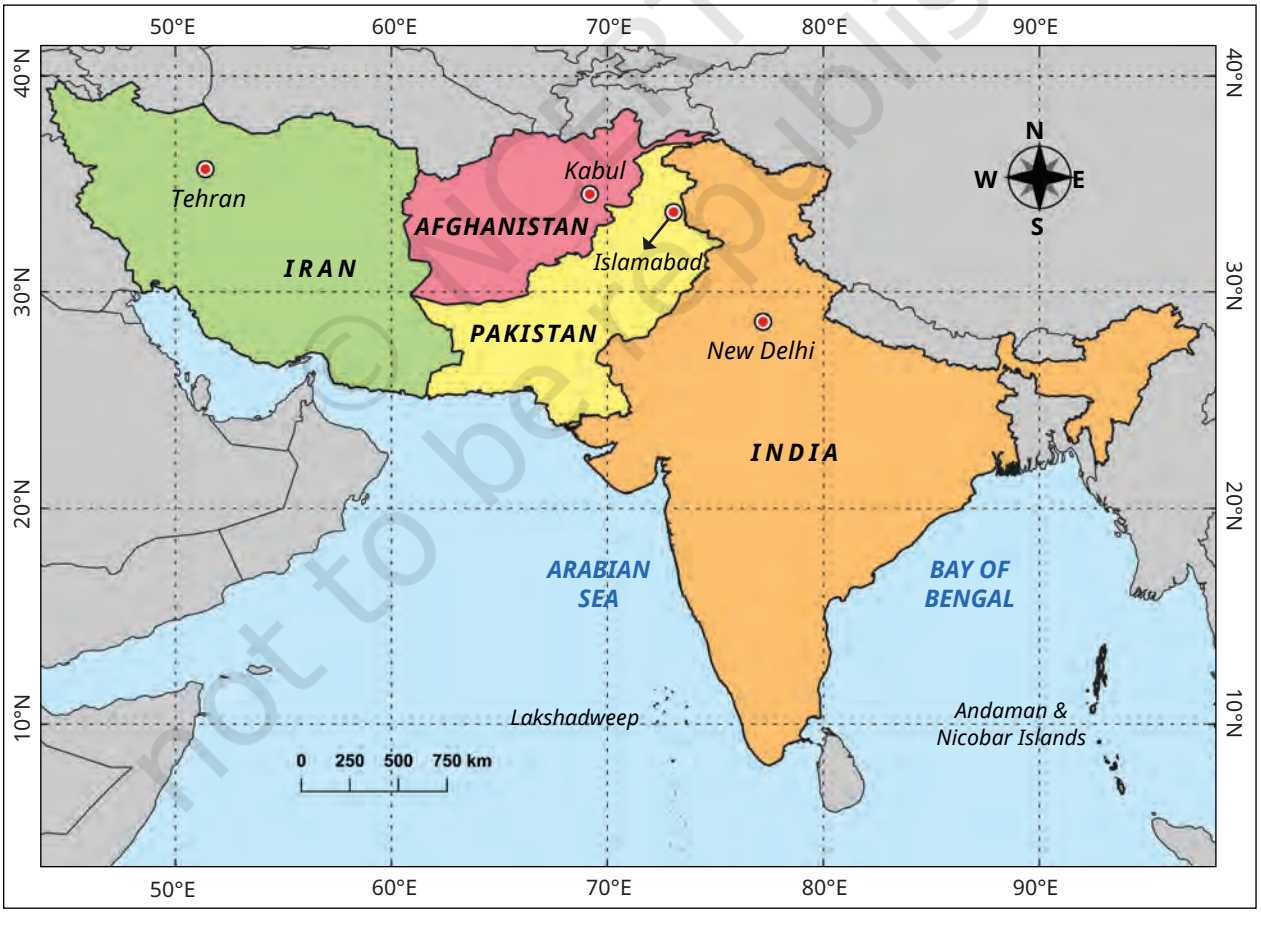

Fig. 2.5. India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran

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Before the 1947 Partition — a legacy of the colonial era that continues to shape the present — **Pakistan** was a part of India. Let us note for now that Pakistan was founded on a religious basis, unlike India; this will be explored further in Grade 8. Suffice to say that these nations share one of the most complex relationships in South Asia. Since the Partition, several military conflicts and wars, including wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971, and full-scale conflicts like the Kargil War in 1999, have defined an ongoing tension. In particular, frequent terrorist attacks launched against India with the support of the Pakistan army have prevented normal relations between the two countries.

The border between the two nations stretches across the Indian states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, and the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh (Fig. 2.5). It is not just a geographical line, but also a symbol of shared heritage as well as a tragically divided history.

This tumultuous journey has also been marked by attempts at peace, such as periods of trade and the opening of pilgrimage routes for Hindu or Sikh pilgrims — religious and cultural landmarks of a shared past that lives on. The Katas Raj temple complex in Pakistan's Punjab is one such example, linked to the Mahābhārata and containing a sacred pond. Other examples include several ancient Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh shrines, such as the Hinglaj Mata Mandir in Balochistan. Besides, languages, cuisines, music, and festivals continue to bridge the border.

DON'T MISS OUT

The Kartarpur Corridor is a visa-free border crossing between India and Pakistan, created to allow Indian pilgrims to visit the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur, Pakistan (Fig. 2.6). Pilgrims using the corridor do not need a visa, only a permit, which makes it easier for thousands of people to visit the gurdwara. This gurdwara holds great religious significance as it is the final resting place of Guru Nānak Dev, the founder of Sikhism, who spent the last 18 years of his life there.

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For decades, Indian devotees could only view this holy site from a distance, using binoculars set up near the border at Dera Baba Nanak in Punjab. The idea for a corridor was first proposed in the 1990s but only became a reality in 2019, when the corridor was officially opened to mark Guru Nānak's 550th birth anniversary.

Can the Kartarpur Corridor be a model for the possible progress of peace and dialogue?

Fig. 2.6. A view of the Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara

A newborn neighbour

India and Bangladesh have an enduring relationship shaped by a common history, culture and language. 'History' because, as we will see in higher grades, **Bangladesh** (which was 'East Pakistan' earlier) was born in 1971 as the outcome of a war between India and Pakistan; and 'language' because Bangla is a language common to Bangladesh and India's state of West Bengal.

The land border between the two countries (Fig. 2.7) is even longer than India's border with China; it runs along the Indian states of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. India and Bangladesh also share several transboundary river systems originating from the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. The rivers play a major role in agriculture, fisheries, transportation, and the livelihoods of millions of people in both countries.

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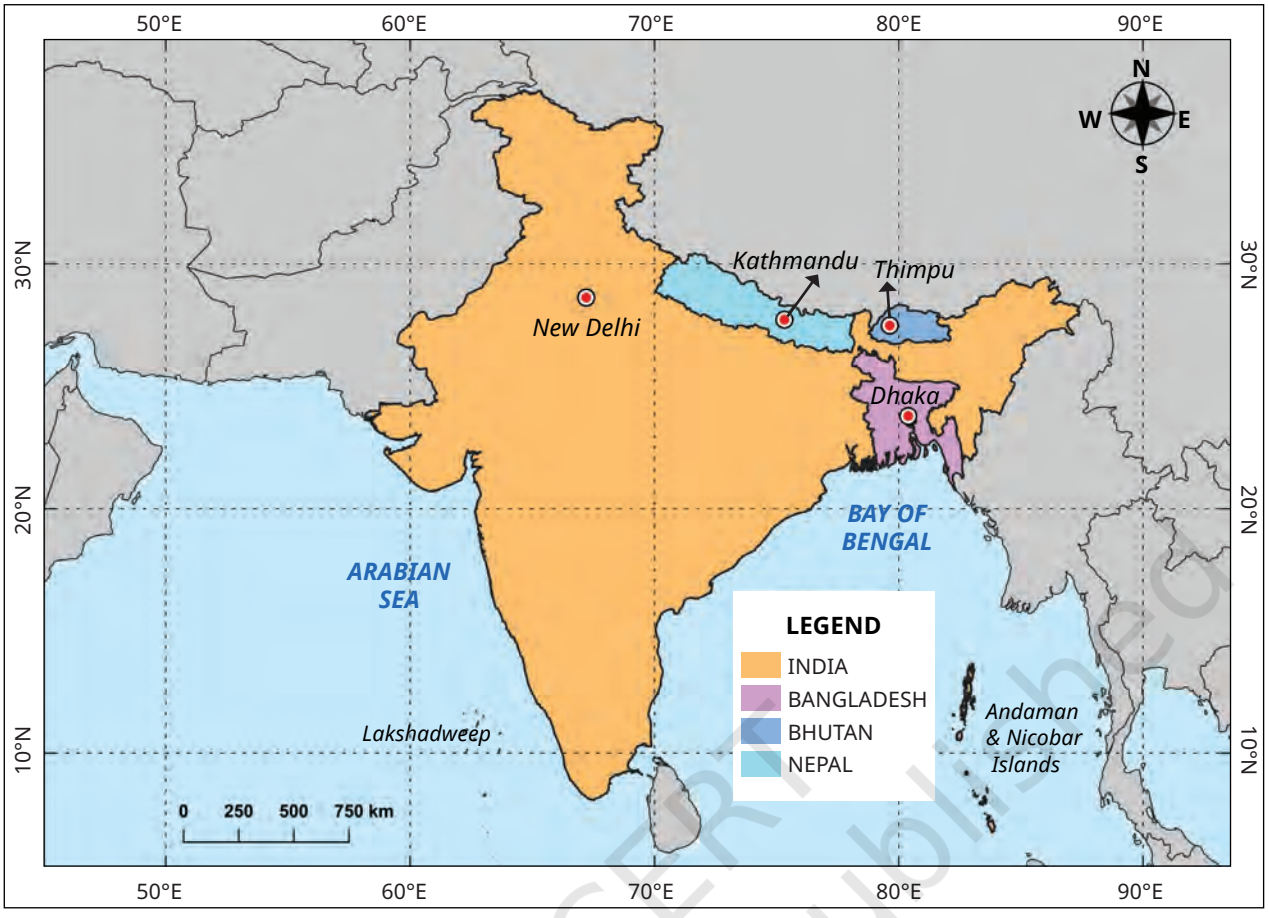

Fig. 2.7. India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan

India and Bangladesh have built on their historical ties through strong diplomatic, economic, strategic and cultural cooperation, making their relationship one of the most important in South Asia.

The two countries also share a coastline, and therefore a maritime environment. The Sundarban National Park (Fig. 2.8) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its protection and management coordinated by the two neighbours. A home to the Bengal tiger and many other species, it is important in terms of biodiversity, as well as climate

Fig. 2.8. A view of the largest mangrove forest of the world, in the Sundarban National Park. About two-thirds of the forest lies in Bangladesh and the rest in India.

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resilience since it serves as a barrier to cyclones. However, because of global warming and climate change, experts predict that Bangladesh will have to face the impact of rising sea levels and increasingly intense cyclones in coming years. Many people are likely to lose their homes or see their livelihoods affected.

In the lap of the Himalayas

Nestled in the lap of the Himalayas, **Nepal** shares a long and open border with India, stretching across the Indian states of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Sikkim (Fig. 2.7). This geographical proximity has allowed for centuries of interaction and cooperation between the two nations and the relationship is marked by shared heritage, spiritual linkages, cross-border movement, and political partnerships.

Culturally, the ties between India and Nepal are profound. Pilgrims from both countries regularly visit sacred sites across the border. The Paśhupatinātha temple in Kathmandu (Fig. 2.9),

Fig. 2.9. The Paśhupatinātha Temple, Kathmandu, where Śhiva is worshipped as the protector of animals

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a major Hindu pilgrimage destination, draws thousands of Indian visitors every year. Festivals such as Daśhain (Daśhaharā), Tihar (Dīpāvalī), and Holi are observed with equal enthusiasm in both countries. These shared spiritual traditions strengthen the people-to-people bonds and reflect a rich tapestry of mutual cultural appreciation.

On the political front, India and Nepal have maintained close diplomatic relations, largely shaped by the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship. This treaty provides for open borders, free movement of people and goods, and cooperation in areas such as defence and foreign policy. Cross-border migration and trade form another vital component of the India-Nepal relationship. The open border policy allows citizens to cross freely without passports or visas, enabling people from both sides to access education, healthcare, employment, and maintain family connections. Daily life in many border towns reflects this close interdependence, with vibrant markets and thriving trade.

India is Nepal's largest trading partner, supplying essential goods such as petroleum, medicines, food items, and manufactured products. In return, Nepal exports agricultural produce, handicrafts, and garments. These exchanges not only contribute to economic development but also reinforce the social and economic integration of the border communities. The India-Nepal relationship stands as a unique example of neighbourhood cooperation shaped by a shared history, faith, geography, and a commitment to regional harmony.

DON'T MISS OUT

What is an 'open border'? It is when people from two countries can travel across the border without a visa or passport. This enables families living on both sides to stay connected, and people to move easily for work, education, trade, or religious visits. However, India and Nepal work together to ensure the open border remains safe and is not misused; it is a symbol of trust and friendship between the two countries.

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The 'Land of the Thunder Dragon'

Bhutan, called 'Drukyul' or 'Land of the Thunder Dragon' by its inhabitants, is a small, landlocked Himalayan kingdom nestled between India and China. Bhutan's border with India touches the states of Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh (see Fig. 2.7). Over centuries, Bhutan has developed strong economic and cultural links with India.

DON'T MISS OUT

Several important rivers originate in Bhutan and flow into India; they are not only vital for agriculture but also serve as the foundation for hydroelectric power generation, which is one of the most significant areas of bilateral cooperation. Some major power plants contribute to Bhutan's economic growth and also supply renewable energy to India.

Fig. 2.10. The emblem of Bhutan. Notice the dragons that symbolise the 'Land of the Thunder Dragon'. What other elements look familiar?

Fig. 2.11. The Tala Hydroelectric Project, built with support from India, being dedicated to the peoples of Bhutan and India by the two countries' respective prime ministers in 2008.

Cultural and religious ties further strengthen the bond between the two nations. Rooted in the shared heritage of Buddhism, Bhutan and India maintain deep spiritual connections. Bhutanese pilgrims frequently visit sacred Buddhist sites in India, such as Bodh Gaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Udayagiri, and Sikkim. The influence of Indian Buddhist masters such as Guru Padmasambhava (Guru

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Rinpoche), who introduced the Vajrayāna school of Buddhism to Bhutan in the 8th century CE, remains central to Bhutan's religious identity. Indeed the dragon found on Bhutan's emblem (Fig. 2.10) and flag is said to symbolise the 'the thunderous voice of the Buddha's teachings'.

The relationship between India and Bhutan is marked by mutual respect, strategic cooperation, and cultural affinity. Their partnership exemplifies how shared geography, spiritual heritage, and economic collaboration can foster long-lasting and peaceful regional ties.

DON'T MISS OUT

Three main schools of Buddhism grew in ancient India and migrated to many of her neighbours:

- → **Theravāda**, or the 'School of the Elders', took shape around the 3rd century BCE. It is considered closest to the Buddha's original teachings and today has followers mainly in Sri Lanka and in Southeast Asia, especially Thailand and Myanmar.
- → **Mahāyāna** or the 'Great Vehicle' came into being around the 1st century BCE, incorporating new ideas and practices, such as a belief that the Buddha had a divine nature and could guide people in many forms. This school travelled to several countries, including China, Japan and Korea, where several sub-schools (including Zen Buddhism) emerged on the way.
- → **Vajrayāna**, or the 'Diamond Vehicle', also generally known as 'Tantric Buddhism', arose around the 6th century CE as an extension of Mahāyāna. It emphasised special techniques and secret teachings such as the use of mantras, mandalas (sacred diagrams), and visualisations of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas. Tibetan Buddhism derived from this school around the 7th century CE.

Even today, these three schools of Buddhism are still followed in some parts of India, especially in the Himalayan states.

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Fig. 2.12. 'Tiger's nest', a Buddhist monastery perched high on the mountainside overhanging the Paro valley, Bhutan

DON'T MISS OUT

Bhutan developed the concept of Gross National Happiness Index as a more holistic measure of their nation's progress compared with prevailing concepts like Gross Domestic Product. This includes ideas of sustainability, good governance and the promotion of culture, among others. The country assesses its progress periodically based on this index.

India's gateway to Southeast Asia

India and **Myanmar** (earlier known as 'Burma') share a long-standing relationship grounded in historical, ethnic, and cultural connections, despite periods of political turmoil. As the birthplace of Buddhism, India holds special spiritual significance for the people of Myanmar, many of whom visit India during pilgrimages. The two countries are connected by a land border as well as a maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal (Fig. 2.20). India's northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram share borders with Myanmar, facilitating cross-border interaction and cooperation. These ties form the basis for sustained cultural exchanges and regional connectivity initiatives between the two nations.

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Fig. 2.13. Myanmar on the left and India (Mizoram) on the right bank of Tio River. The river forms part of the international boundary between the two countries (picture taken in 2008).

Myanmar is also India's gateway to Southeast Asia. The Land Border Crossing Agreement of 2018 between India and Myanmar eased cross-border movement for people living in border areas, boosted trade, enhanced connectivity, and deepened people-to-people ties, especially between India's northeast and Myanmar. Over the past couple of years, however, some restrictions have been placed on the free movement across the land border on account of conflicts in these areas.

DON'T MISS OUT

Fig. 2.14. The Ananda temple, Bagan

A few years ago, India helped restore the Ananda temple in Bagan, among others, that had been damaged by earthquakes. India also gifted a 16-foot replica of the Sarnath statue of the Buddha to the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar.

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Fig. 2.15. National Highway 1, Afghanistan, from Zaranj to Delaram; it connects to the Asian Highway Network 1 (AH 1). Parts of NH 44 in India are also part of AH 1.

A land-locked neighbour

Afghanistan, a multiethnic landlocked country in south-central Asia, once shared a direct land border with India. However, the creation of Pakistan in 1947 has complicated access between the two countries (Fig. 2.5). Despite these geopolitical challenges, India and Afghanistan have, by and large, maintained close and friendly ties rooted in shared history and culture, besides significant strategic interests.

Their connection dates back to ancient times, when the historic Uttarāpatha trade route linked the Ganga plains to Central Asia via Afghanistan, fostering centuries of exchange in goods, religion, and ideas. Stretching from Gandhāra (modern Kandahar) through major Indian cities like Takṣhaśhilā, Varanasi, and Pāṭaliputra, this cultural superhighway enabled the flow of Buddhism, Hinduism, art, and philosophy.

Before the spread of Islam in the 7th century CE, Afghanistan was a thriving centre of Buddhist and Hindu culture. Kingdoms like Kapiśha and Zābul mirrored Indian systems of governance. The gigantic Buddhas of Bamiyan, carved into Afghan cliffs, stood as powerful symbols of Mahāyāna Buddhism's reach from India, reflecting the deep civilisational ties between the two regions; sadly, they were destroyed in 2001.

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In recent decades, India and Afghanistan have continued to share strong people-to-people ties. India has supported education, healthcare, and infrastructure development in Afghanistan, including the construction of the Afghan Parliament building and the Zaranj-Delaram highway. These initiatives, despite ups and downs, reflect a wish to build on the long-shared history of friendship and mutual respect.

India's Maritime Neighbours

From a few centuries BCE, Indian traders were sailing to Southeast Asian countries in search of gold and other valuable resources. They frequently visited the islands of Java, Sumatra, and Malaya, so much so that these places came to be known as 'Suvarṇabhūmi' (the 'golden land') or 'Suvarṇadvīpa' (the 'golden island'). But let us start closer to home.

DON'T MISS OUT

Many nations in India's neighbourhood came together in 1985 to form an association called SAARC — the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation — in order to promote mutual interests, sociocultural and economic progress.

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are members. SAARC aims to share resources around development in science, education, health, and other areas. However, political tensions among some members have often disrupted its functioning.

Several more such regional groups of nations centred on the Indian Ocean exist for other specific purposes.

India's nearest maritime neighbour

Sri Lanka is an island nation located to the southeast of India, with the two countries divided by a narrow stretch of sea known as the Palk Strait. At its nearest point, the distance between the two countries is only about 32 km, making them close maritime neighbours with a long history of cultural contact, trade, and

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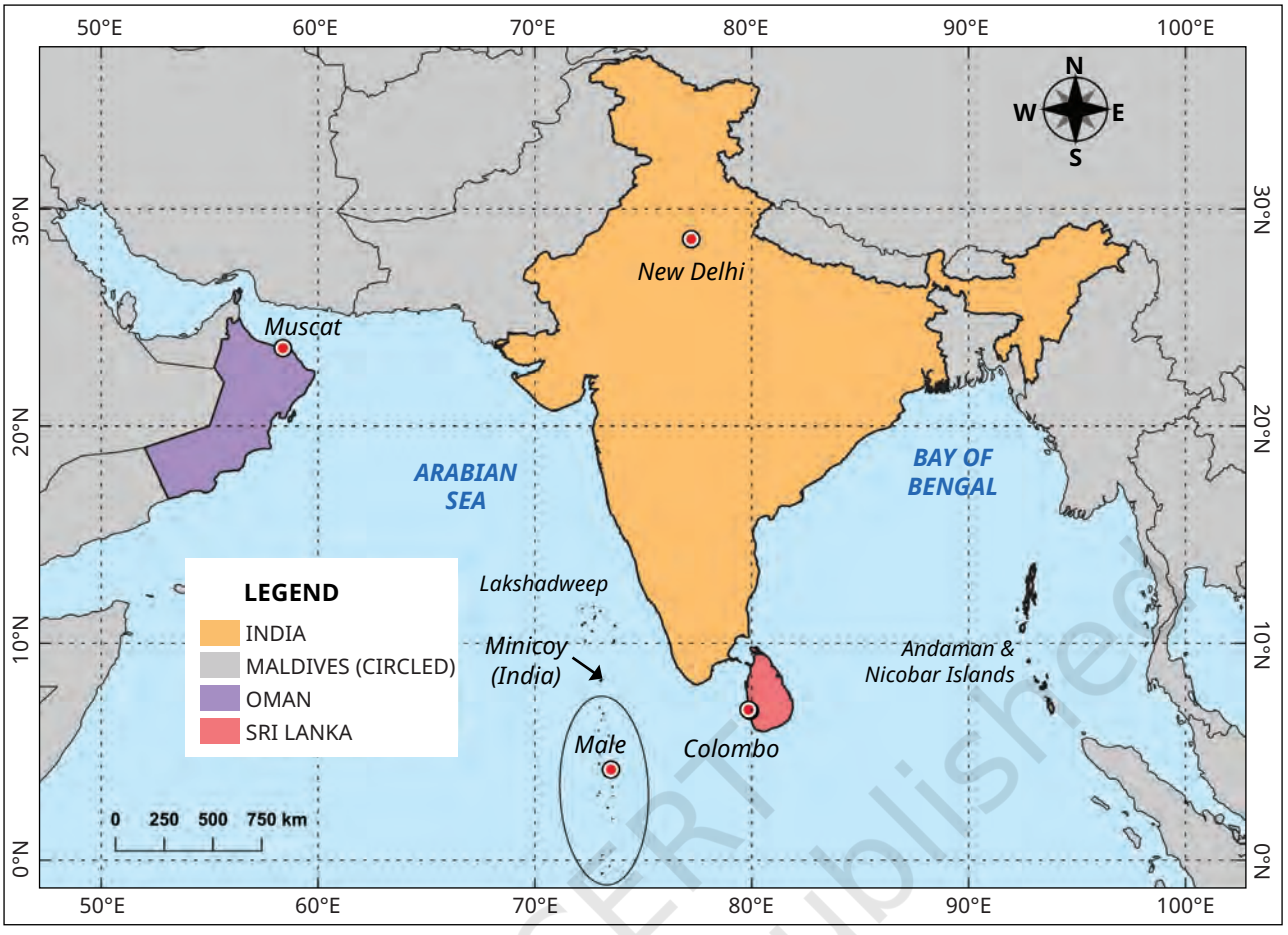

Fig. 2.16. India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives (circled) and Oman

cooperation. Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka in the 3rd century BCE by Mahendra and Sanghamitrā, the son and the daughter of Emperor Aśhoka. Hinduism also travelled there, notably through its two Epics. Even now, both countries continue to celebrate this shared spiritual and cultural heritage.

However, the relationship has not always been smooth. One difficult time was during Sri Lanka's civil war from the mid-1980s to around 2010. The war was mainly between the Sinhalese majority (whose language is Sinhala) and the Tamil minority, which has close cultural ties to India. Because of the fighting, many Tamil families had to leave Sri Lanka and move to south India, especially Tamil Nadu.

India and Sri Lanka share a multidimensional partnership that combines cultural closeness, historical ties, economic cooperation, and strategic collaboration. The relationship continues to grow through people-to-people exchanges, regional groupings and shared goals for peace and development in South Asia.

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Fig. 2.17. Traditional fishermen at sunset in Sri Lanka, standing on stilts

Fig. 2.18. Brightly coloured traditional wooden masks of Sri Lanka; this tradition may have connections with similar mask-making traditions in India, particularly from south India.

A nation of islets

India and **the Maldives** share a close relationship based on geography, history, and culture. The Maldives, which consists of over 1,100 islets (or small islands), is only about 130 km from Minicoy (an Indian island part of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep), making it an important neighbour, especially for trade and security in the Indian Ocean (Figs. 2.16 and 2.20).

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The two countries share centuries-old cultural ties shaped by maritime trade. Buddhism travelled to the Maldives early on, as established by archaeological finds of ancient Buddhist temples and inscriptions. Influences from Tamil Nadu and Kerala brought language, cuisine, and arts to the islands. Maldivian dishes like coconut curries and *roshi* reflect South Indian flavours, while the Boduberu dance echoes Tamil folk rhythms. Dhivehi (the official language of the Maldives, also called Maldivian) vocabulary and boat-building techniques also show South Indian roots.

India was one of the first countries to recognise the Maldives after it became independent in 1965. Over the years, the two nations have built strong ties in many areas, including defence, trade, and disaster relief. India's quick help during the 2004 tsunami, the 2014 water crisis in Malé (the Maldives' capital), and the COVID-19 pandemic further strengthened this bond. These actions highlighted India's ability to respond quickly in times of crisis and further reinforced her role as the region's trusted first responder.

DON'T MISS OUT

Dhivehi, the language of the Maldives, is a vibrant blend shaped by centuries of contact with Indian cultures. It borrows words from Sanskrit, Prakrit, Tamil, Malayalam, and Hindi. *Raajje* (king) and *mas* (fish) echo Sanskrit words *rājā* and *matsya*, while *dhoni* (boat) and *kukulhu* (chicken) share roots with Tamil and Malayalam. Modern Hindi words like *filmu* have entered everyday use, thanks to Bollywood. Dhīvehī reflects the Maldives' rich history as a maritime hub shaped by Indian linguistic and cultural influences.

As an island nation, the Maldives is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including a rise in sea level which could reach 1 metre by the end of the century, partly submerging many of its islands.

This nation is a member of the International Solar Alliance, an Indian initiative (we will revisit this in Grade 8), which shares research technology on solar energy. This joint effort towards

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Fig. 2.19. (Left) A satellite view of the main islands of the Maldives (notice the faint outlines), with India's southern tip visible in the top right corner. (Right) To draw attention to the danger of rising sea levels owing to global warming, the Maldives' president and cabinet of ministers held in 2009 a meeting underwater, at a depth of 4 m below the surface.

sustainability is another example of the long-term relationship between the two countries.

From Dvārakā to Dvāravatī and Ayodhyā to Ayutthayā

India and **Thailand** are closely linked through maritime routes and regional geography. Sharing a maritime boundary (Fig. 2.20), the two countries have been connected since ancient times through trade and cultural exchange. As early as the 3rd century BCE, Indian traders and scholars sailed to what is now Thailand, exchanging goods such as spices and textiles, while also bringing religious and cultural ideas that would deeply influence the region.

Indeed, the impact of Indian culture is reflected in the names of later Thai kingdoms. The Dvāravatī culture, which flourished from the 6th to the 11th centuries CE, derived its name from a Sanskrit word for 'that which has gates', directly referencing Dvārakā, Kṛiṣhṇa's city described in the Mahābhārata. Much later, the Ayutthayā Kingdom, founded in 1351, was named after the

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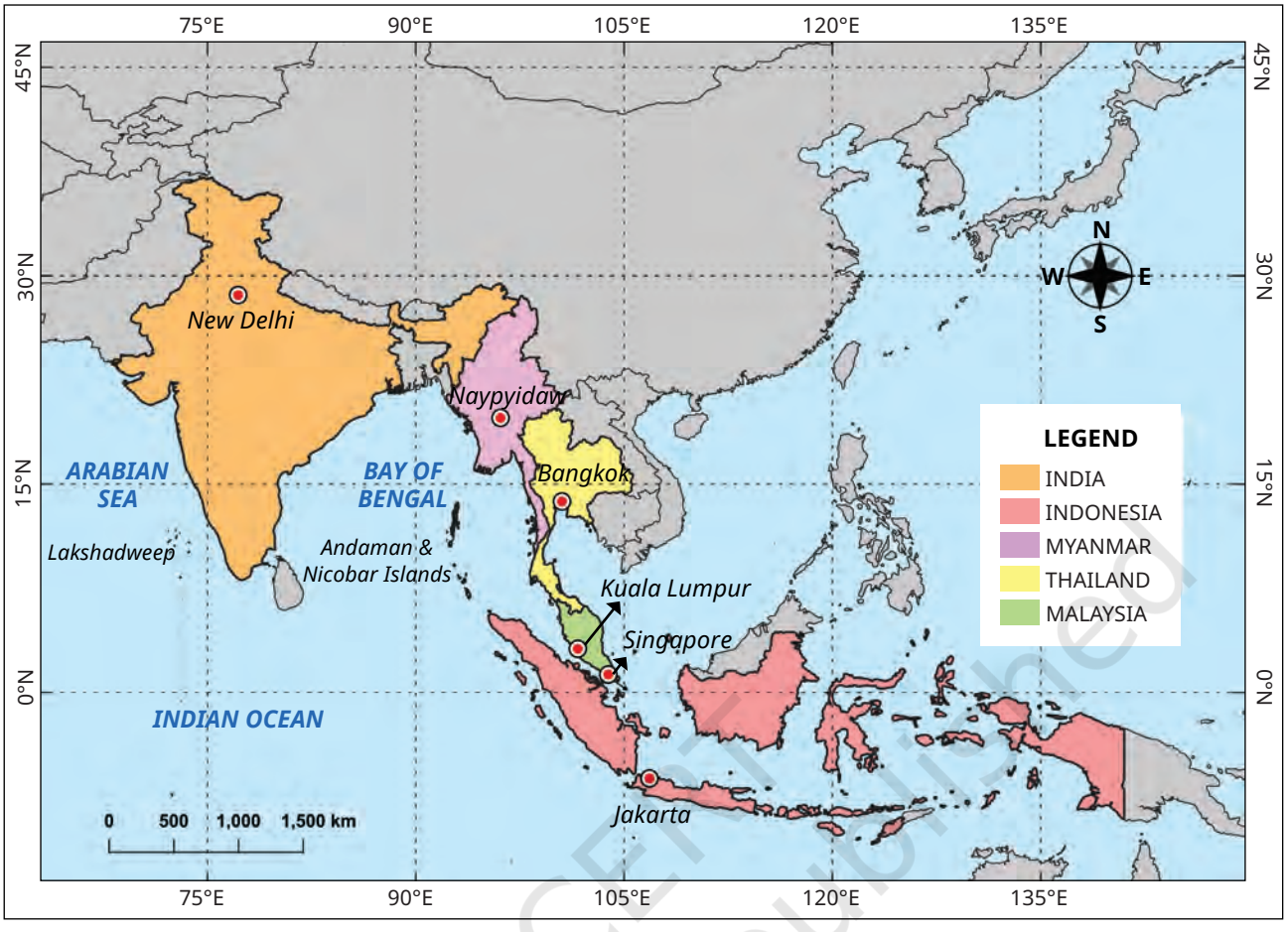

Fig. 2.20. India, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia

ancient Indian city of Ayodhyā, the birthplace of Rāma according to the Rāmāyaṇa. This choice of place names reflecting Indian traditions illustrates the profound impact of Indian civilisation on Thailand's history and culture.

DON'T MISS OUT

Monarchs of the current Chakri dynasty have all been named after Rāma; the current king, for instance, is Rama X (that is, the tenth King Rama in this dynasty).

Cultural ties were further strengthened by the shared heritage of Buddhism and Hinduism. Indian monks, scholars and texts played a central role in shaping the religious and philosophical foundations of Thai society. Theravāda Buddhism is widely practised there, while Hindu deities and stories from Indian epics

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are also integrated into Thai royal ceremonies, dance forms and literature.

LET'S EXPLORE

Fig. 2.21. A massive sculpture at Bangkok airport

The scene in Fig. 2.21 depicts the well-known Hindu myth of *samudra manthana* or the churning of the ocean. The devas (gods, on the right here) and the asuras (demons, on the left) decided to join forces to churn the cosmic ocean in search of *amrita* or the nectar of immortality, with the serpent Vāsuki as the churning rope and Viṣhṇu (above) presiding over the operation — he will eventually deceive the asuras to make sure that the *amrita* goes to the devas alone. Note also the airport's official name of 'Suvarnabhumi Airport' — does it remind you of something?

The India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway is a modern effort to revive and strengthen these age-old connections. Stretching from India's state of Manipur through Myanmar and into Thailand, this highway improves overland connectivity, enhances regional trade, and supports greater cooperation among the countries involved.

Through both ancient and modern ties, India and Thailand demonstrate how geography, history, and shared values can bring nations closer together across land and sea.

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The Malay Peninsula

Relations between India and **Malaysia** are rooted in historical, cultural, and economic linkages dating back over two millennia, when the Malay Peninsula was connected to India through sea routes across the Bay of Bengal (Fig. 2.20). Hindu and Buddhist cultural influences began early on, with (as in Thailand) names such as 'Srivijaya Kingdom'; around the 4th century CE, the region adopted a script based on India's Brāhmī script. Such influences remain visible in Malaysian society through art and literature in particular even though by the 15th century Islam became the predominant religion. In the 19th and 20th centuries, a large number of Indian workers, mainly from south India, migrated to Malaysia to work as labour on the rubber plantations. The Malaysian Indian community remains prominent today with 9 per cent of the population being of Indian origin.

India is one of Malaysia's largest trading partners, with collaborations in palm oil, energy, infrastructure, and information technology. The two nations are also strategic partners, working closely on regional security and maritime stability. Many Indian organisations working in areas of manufacturing, information technology, research, tourism, and education have set up collaborations with local companies, furthering economic ties.

Fig. 2.22. The Petronas Towers at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital, are the world's tallest twin skyscrapers.

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The 'Lion City'

The name of **Singapore** derives from 'Singapuram' or 'lion city', which was the name of an ancient kingdom just off the southern tip of present-day Malaysia. Just like Thailand and Malaysia, it had close cultural and commercial ties with India, with Buddhist monks as well as traders visiting the region a few centuries BCE. After many fluctuations, Singapore became a British colony, then a part of Malaysia, and eventually a separate nation in 1965.

LET'S EXPLORE

Seeing that Tamil is one of Singapore's official languages, what does this suggest to you about the relationship between south India and Singapore?

Fig. 2.23. A signage in Singapore's four official languages — English, Mandarin, Tamil and Malay.

Singapore has served as a benchmark for urban planning and maintenance. The citizens play an important role in keeping the streets litter-free. It helps that anyone found throwing garbage on the street, disrespecting traffic rules or indulging in **jaywalking** will be fined heavily! With a focus on wellbeing, the city has many people-friendly and sustainability-oriented features such as parks, walkways, terrace gardens, and so on.

Jaywalking: Pedestrians walking or crossing roads without taking care to follow traffic rules

Singapore's contacts with India remain vibrant in several areas. In recent years, the island nation has become one of the largest foreign investors in India, especially in infrastructure and technology sectors, and many Indian companies have set up offices in Singapore. Singapore receives large numbers of Indian tourists and is one of the preferred destinations of Indian students for higher studies.

India's presence also remains visible in cultural areas, from art to cuisine to religion (Buddhism being currently the most widely

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practised religion). Ethnically, about 9 per cent of Singaporean residents are of Indian origin, many of whom live in an area of Singapore called 'Little India'.

Fig. 2.24. Little India, an area of Singapore city

The Indonesian archipelago

India and **Indonesia**, separated by the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, are close maritime neighbours with a long history of cultural, religious and commercial exchange. Indonesia is not a single landmass: it is actually an archipelago, that is, an extensive group of islands (Fig. 2.20) — in this case, several large islands and over 17,000 smaller ones! The two neighbouring nations have a legacy of trade and sociocultural interaction that dates back to early maritime trade between Indian kingdoms and the large islands of Java and Sumatra over 2,000 years ago. Collaborations between India's ancient university of Nālandā and the ancient Indonesian Muara Jambi temple complex further strengthened the bond. Later, Islam travelled to Indonesia from the shores of India.

Fig. 2.25. The Indonesian currency, the rupiah, carries the national symbol, Garuḍa, the vāhana (vehicle) of Viṣhṇu

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Fig. 2.26. The mandala-shaped Borobudur Stūpa, the world's largest Buddhist monument

The shared history and culture, and vision for the future, have played a significant role in expanding bilateral relations. In present times, India and Indonesia work closely in regional groups to promote peace, trade, and sustainable development in the Indo-Pacific region. Strategic cooperation has also grown stronger, especially in areas like maritime security, defence, and disaster relief. Both countries have large coastlines and shared concerns about piracy, climate change, and the protection of sea lanes, which makes their partnership especially important.

Together, India and Indonesia show how two ancient civilisations can build a strong, forward-looking partnership rooted in shared values and mutual respect.

DON'T MISS OUT

A *stūpa* is a Buddhist shrine, often built in the shape of a dome, that keeps sacred relics, either of the Buddha himself, of senior monks or of other revered figures. (Remember, for example, the Sanchi Stūpa and the Bharhut Stūpa in Part 1 of this textbook.) The Borobudur Stūpa (Fig. 2.26), built in stone in the 8th and 9th centuries CE, is unique not only for its huge dimensions (tourists would look like tiny dots on the picture) and pyramidal shape in five enormous platforms, but also because it harbours over 500 statues of the Buddha and many smaller *stūpas*. Moreover, its highly geometric design replicates a mandala; mandalas are traditional Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina geometric symbols used in various rituals and generally symbolising the entire cosmos.

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Fig. 2.27. Indonesian actors performing a scene from the Rāmāyaṇa

DON'T MISS OUT

Indonesian islands lie in a region that experiences frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, which makes Indonesia one of the most earthquake-prone countries in the world.

On 26 December 2004, a powerful earthquake under the Indian Ocean near Indonesia triggered a massive tsunami. Giant waves swept across the ocean, striking the coasts of many countries and causing serious damage: in India alone, some 15,000 people lost their lives, especially in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Across the whole region, more than 200,000 people were killed.

This disaster exposed the urgent need for better early warning systems. India thus joined hands with Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and other Indian Ocean countries to set up a network of sensors, satellites, and communication links. The Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre in Hyderabad helps alert not only India but also neighbouring countries, potentially saving many lives when earthquakes strike the ocean floor.

An Ancient Neighbour

Let us travel westward again. India and **Iran** have shared close ties since the Bronze Age; trade and cultural exchanges took place early between India and the rugged Iranian plateau

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Fig. 2.28. The Shahid Behesti Port at Chabahar, Iran

through land routes passing through present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan (Fig. 2.5). Gradually, such routes became part of the Silk Route, with people, goods, and ideas moving back and forth, connecting the two lands in the fields of language, literature, art, architecture, food etc. Sea routes were also used, since Iran's ports were within easy reach of India's west coast.

The Avesta, the ancient sacred text of Zoroastrianism (see 'India, a Home to Many' in this textbook), has parallels with India's Ṛigveda. Indian texts such as the Mahābhārata mention Persians under the name *Pārasīka*, and the later Persian language (which belongs to the same language family as Sanskrit) was used as court language in India by the Mughals and other rulers. Of course, the Parsis of India have been a living link with the ancient Persian culture.

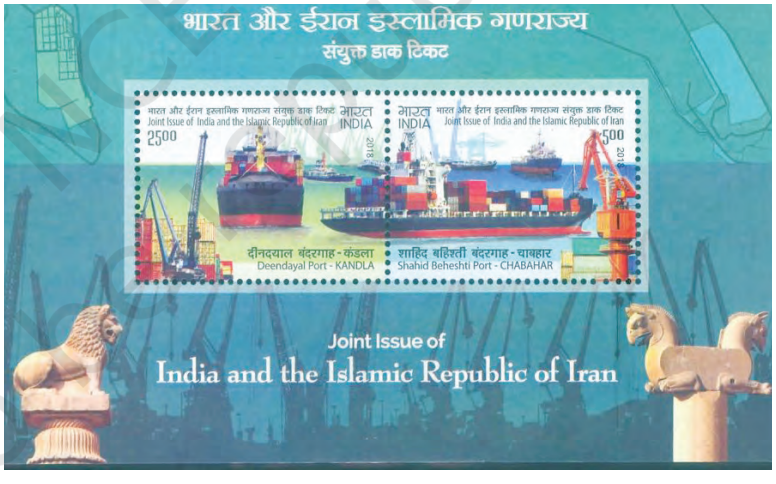

Fig. 2.29. Joint stamps issued to mark the strategic partnership between India and Iran for the development of ports

In modern times, India and Iran have cooperated in many areas such as trade, energy, and transport. India is helping to develop Iran's Chabahar Port (Figs. 2.28 and 2.29), which gives India better access to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Despite international challenges, both countries continue to engage with each other as important neighbours in Asia.

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The 'Land of Copper'

Fig. 2.30. A copper ingot from Oman, dated to the 3rd millennium BCE

Located on the southeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula at the intersection of the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea (Fig. 2.16), **Oman** shares maritime boundaries with India and holds significant strategic importance. As a key partner in India's engagement with the Gulf region, Oman plays an important role in regional forums.

The relationship between India and Oman is rooted in shared geography, history and cultural ties, with people-to-people contact dating back over 5,000 years, during the time of the Indus or Harappan (or Indus-Sarasvatī) civilisation. As Oman is rich in copper, it is thought that Harappan traders brought back **ingots** of the metal to the coppersmiths of the Indus-Sarasvatī cities (Fig. 2.30).

Ingot: A lump or block of metal put into a shape convenient for transport and reworking.

DON'T MISS OUT

Fig. 2.31. The Motishwar Mandir, a Śhiva temple in Muscat, Oman

Over 10% of the population of Oman is of Indian origin. Merchant communities from north-western parts of India settled there over the past few centuries; there is an indigenous population of Indians living in Oman. The Hindu community was allowed to build a Śhiva temple in the early 20th century (Fig. 2.31).

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Fig. 2.32. An India-Oman joint military exercise, 2024

Moreover, Oman is India's closest defence partner in the Gulf, being the first in the region where India holds joint military exercises with all three armed forces (Fig. 2.32). The two countries work together on Indian Ocean maritime security.

Before we move on ...

- India and her neighbours share centuries of cultural, spiritual, religious and commercial exchanges. India's schools of thought and belief, arts, literature and architecture left a visible cultural imprint across countries of Southeast Asia.
- Ancient trade routes like the Uttarāpatha, Dakṣhiṇāpatha, the Silk Route, and spice routes connected India with Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Arabian Peninsula, resulting in trade and cultural exchanges with all those regions.
- India spread her traditions peacefully through trade, pilgrimage, and culture.
- Today, regional connectivity projects aim to revive these historical links. Besides, Indian films, music, and television often contribute to sustained bonds, in addition to shared strategic and trade interests.

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Questions and activities

1. Explain who a maritime neighbour is with two examples with respect to India.
2. How has Buddhism created links with India's neighbours? Give examples to explain your answer.
3. What does 'open border' policy mean? How does the India–Nepal 'open border' policy affect the lives of people living along the border?
4. The chapter says, "Being neighbours is not just about geography." Explain this statement with an example.
5. What are the different ways in which India has helped smaller countries in her neighbourhood? Explain with examples.
6. How do shared challenges become opportunities for cooperation? Were there examples in this chapter to illustrate this?
7. If borders were drawn only by culture and connections, how would the map look different?
8. On blank maps:
   - → Label India's neighbours.
   - → Draw arrows showing cultural flows (e.g., food, festivals, languages) between India and her neighbours.
   - → Imagine and redraw new "borders of friendship" that connect neighbours through rivers, trade routes, or cultural zones.
   - → Collect pictures of the flags of the countries listed in this chapter and write your observations.

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CHAPTER 3

Empires and Kingdoms: 6th to 10th Centuries

India never spoke her last word. In all things, she continues, survives and renews herself.

— Louis Renou and Jean Filliozat (French Indologists)

Fig. 3.1. The Shore Temple at Māmallapuram, built during the reign of Narasimhavarman II of the Pallava dynasty.

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The Big Questions

1. *What major changes characterised this period?*
2. *How did the political, cultural, and religious developments shape India during this period?*
3. *What was the impact of foreign invasions and interactions on Indian society and polity during this period?*

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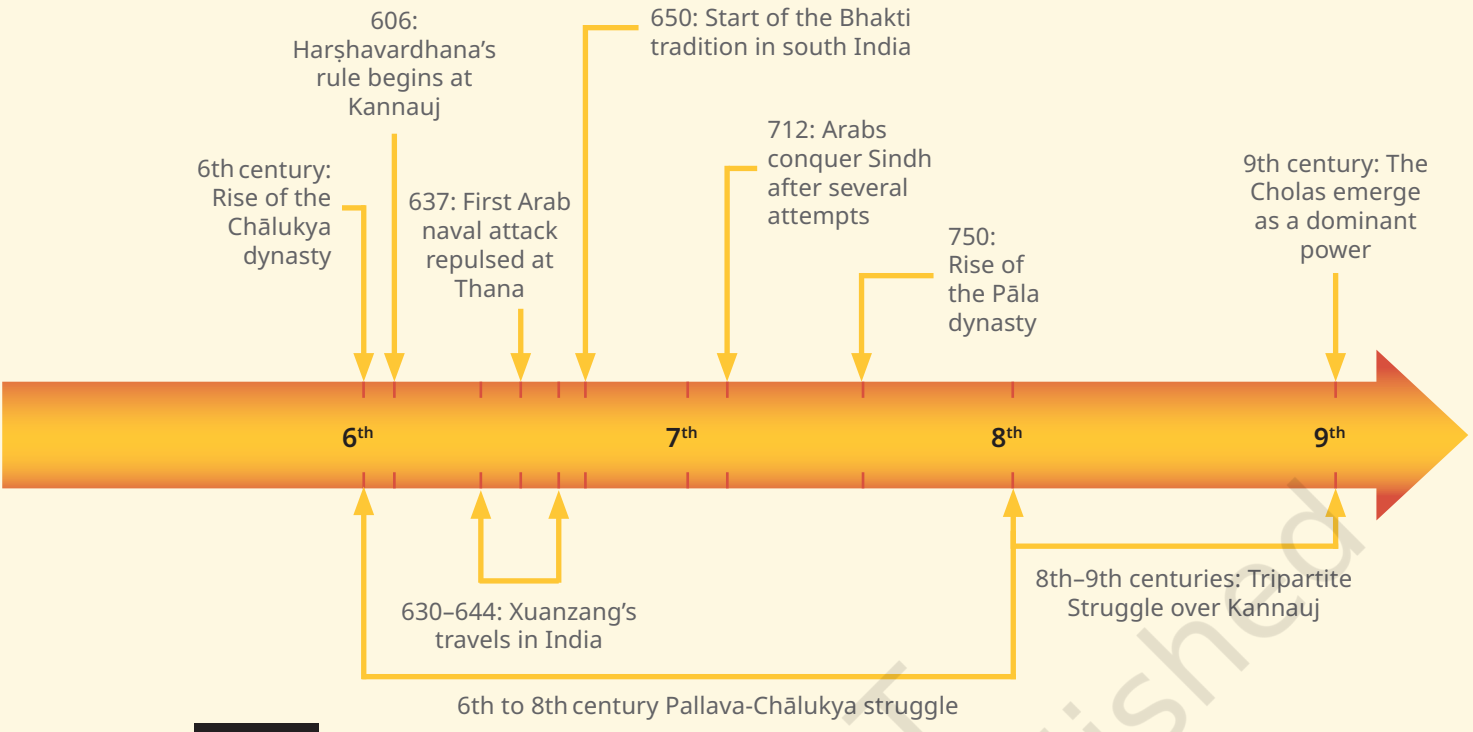

Fig. 3.2.

This chapter and the next together survey the scene in India from the end of the Gupta era about 600 CE to about 1200 CE. These six centuries together have received several names — 'post-classical', 'late classical' and 'early medieval' among others. We need not use any of those terms here, as long as we keep the broad chronology in mind. In Grade 8, we will explore the next centuries, leading up to the colonial era, dominated by British rule in India, and, ultimately, the struggle for freedom from the colonial rule, culminating in India's independence.

Imagine you are in north India some 1,500 years ago. The mighty Gupta Empire (see the chapter on the 'Gupta Era' in Part 1 of this textbook) has lost its dominance. You are a young traveller setting off on an adventure across the subcontinent. Your first stop is Kannauj, a city by River Ganga where a powerful king hosts poets and scholars. A few weeks later, you reach the Chālukya kingdom in the Deccan, where you see magnificent temples and lively cities. In the far south, the Pallavas are carving entire temples out of rock at Māmallapuram (also known as Mahabalipuram), while in Bengal, the Pālas are supporting great universities such as Vikramaśhilā. You don't see large empires in India now, but

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many strong kingdoms. Some call it a time of political rivalry and disorder, but as you travel, you see something different — a land buzzing with new ideas, art, and culture, different in each region, yet all part of one India.

Is this really the end of an age of powerful empires ... or the dawn of a new era? Let's step back in time and see. As you can see on the map (Fig. 3.3), the Guptas are gone, but the land is still dynamic and vibrant with activity. Several regional powers have emerged.

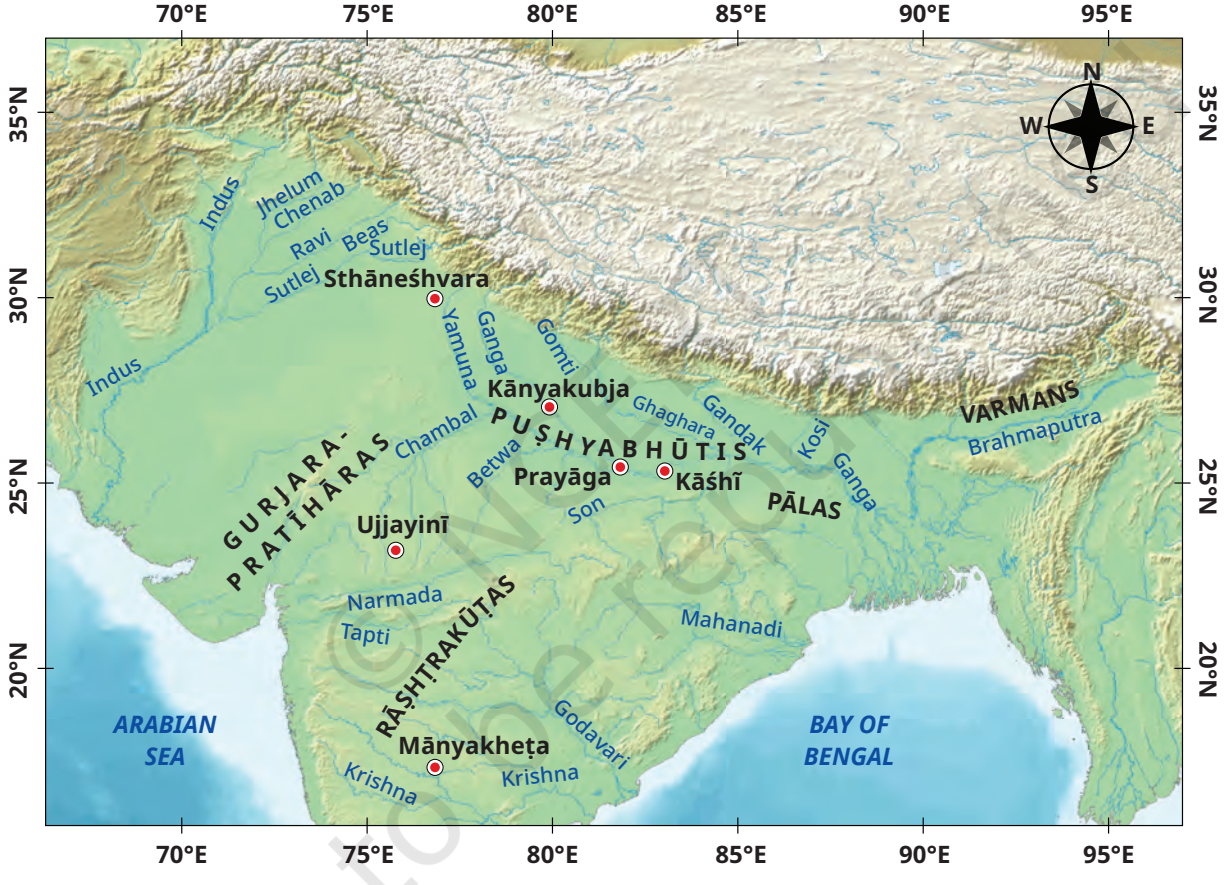

Fig. 3.3. A simplified map of a few dynasties in north and peninsular India from the 7th century onward.

The 'Great King of Kings'

As we look at northern India at this time, we find a remarkable ruler, **Harṣhavardhana**, ascending the throne in 606 CE at Kannauj. He belonged to the **Puṣhyabhūti** (or Vardhana) dynasty, whose earlier capital was Sthāneśhvara (present-day Thanesar in Haryana).

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LET'S EXPLORE

Do you recall where the capital of the earlier Maurya and Gupta empires was located?

How do you think this shift may have shaped the sub-continent's politics in the years to come?

Ruling from Kannauj (or Kanauj, anciently known as Kānyakubja, in present-day Uttar Pradesh), Harṣhavardhana expanded his empire over large parts of northern and eastern India, although its precise extent is not known with certainty.

Fig. 3.4. A coin depicting King Harṣha, and on the reverse side, a peacock fanning its tail.

Fig. 3.5. A detail of a copper plate inscription (found at Banskhera in Uttar Pradesh) in Nagari script, a precursor to Devanagari. It reads, 'svahasto mama mahārājādhirāja śhrī harṣhasya', that is, 'By my own hand, the great king of kings, Śhrī Harṣha'.

LET'S EXPLORE

If you know the Devanagari script, with the help of your teacher try to identify some of the letters in Harṣha's signature (Fig. 3.5).

Harṣha (as he is also known) was a fine poet and dramatist; he is assumed to be the author of three plays composed in classical Sanskrit, which weave love stories with courtly life, or themes of sacrifice and other high ethical values. While these are 'stories', historians use such literature to extract interesting details about the culture and society of those times — from systems of governance to social diversity, technologies, foods, and clothing. Harṣha also patronised scholars like Bāṇabhaṭṭa (also known

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as Bāṇa), who wrote *Kādambarī,* a beautiful literary work and one of the world's first novels. Bāṇa also composed a biography of Harṣha titled *Harṣhacharita.* Inscriptions depict Harṣha as a devotee of Śhiva; according to other sources, he was also deeply attached to Buddhism, while showing respect for all schools of thought and belief.

DON'T MISS OUT

The 7th-century novel *Kādambarī* has a very elaborate and complex plot. It tells of the love story between a prince from Ujjayinī, and Kādambarī, a celestial being. Their romance runs across different births, dreams, and divine worlds, with a story often told within another story. On the way, we get glimpses of courtly life, philosophy, nature and aesthetics. Bāṇa died before completing the novel; it was completed by his son, and is regarded as a masterpiece of classical Indian literature.

Apart from several inscriptions, an important historical source for the period is the travelogue kept by yet another Chinese pilgrim to India. Remember, in Part 1 of this textbook we met Faxian, who in the 5th century left a valuable account of the Gupta era. Now, two centuries later, Xuanzang (his name was earlier transcribed as Hsuan Tsang or Hiuen Tsang) set out on his journey to India and travelled around the subcontinent between 630 and 644. (We met him briefly in the chapter 'The Story of Indian Farming' in this textbook, and earlier in 'India, That Is Bharat' in Grade 6.) Just as Faxian, his motivation for undertaking such a long and difficult journey was to visit sacred Buddhist sites and learn doctrines from Indian teachers; he brought back to China more than 600 manuscripts of Buddhist texts in Sanskrit (carried by 20 horses!) and set about translating them into Chinese. He also left a meticulous account of his

Fig. 3.6. A statue of Xuanzang, carrying his travel pack, at the Longmen Caves of eastern China (a cave complex with many Buddhist statues and carvings)

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journey, in which he recorded important details about politics, diplomacy, culture and religion in the kingdoms he crossed. His travelogue is a major source of information for historians of this period.

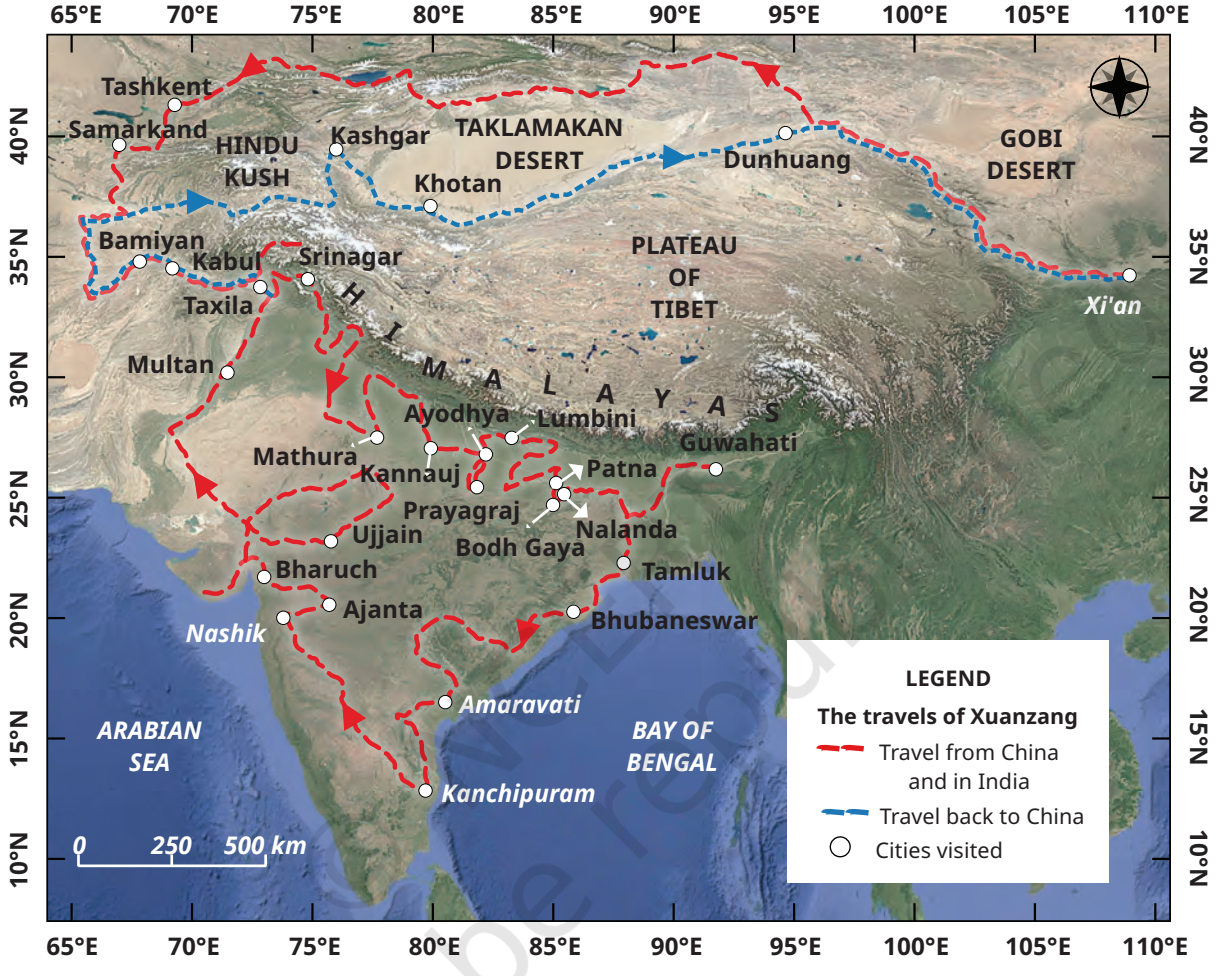

Fig. 3.7. Xuanzang's route from China to India and back. (In this map, we have used modern names for the cities Xuanzang passed through.)

LET'S EXPLORE

Looking at the map (Fig. 3.7), can you identify a few mountain passes or desert areas that Xuanzang had to cross while travelling between China and India?

Can you also identify a few important Buddhist centres of learning that Xuanzang visited in India? Do you know something of their significance?

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Harṣhavardhana welcomed this Chinese pilgrim to his court (apart from two more ambassadors from China). In Xuanzang's honour, he held an assembly at Kannauj, attended by kings and leaders of many religious sects. Xuanzang described Kannauj as a beautiful and prosperous city, and Harṣha as a just and energetic ruler who maintained a vast army and was often engaged in military campaigns. Every five years, he held an assembly at Prayāga (present-day Prayagraj, at the confluence of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers) where, after performing sacred rites, he gave away much wealth, offering it to Buddhists, Brahmins, and the poor.

THINK ABOUT IT

Does the above ceremony remind you of a similar event discussed in Part 1 of this textbook?

Harṣha attempted to extend his empire southward beyond the Narmada, but was held in check by **Pulakeśhin II** of the powerful Chālukya dynasty, whom we will meet soon. Harṣha also dreamed of uniting northern India, but achieved only mixed success. Although he formed an alliance with the **Varman dynasty** of **Kāmarūpa** (in today's Assam; their capital Prāgjyotiṣha was close to today's Guwahati), conflicts with neighbouring kingdoms continued.

Fig. 3.8. A terracotta seal (approximately 13 cm in radius) found at Nālandā, issued by King Bhāskaravarmana of the Varman dynasty, who was an ally of Harṣhavardhana.

A Tripartite Struggle for Kannauj

After Harṣha's death in 647, north India saw much political turmoil. Kannauj became the centre of a long, indecisive '**Tripartite** Struggle', as it is often called. The three warring parties were the **Pālas** from the east, the **Gurjara-Pratīhāras** from the west, and the **Rāṣhṭrakūṭas** from the Deccan

Tripartite: A situation that involves three distinct parties or players

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(see Fig. 3.3). During the 8th and 9th centuries, these three powers repeatedly warred against each other, with fluctuating outcomes and no lasting victor.

LET'S EXPLORE

Why was Kannauj so attractive to those powerful dynasties? Observe its location on the map (Fig. 3.3) and discuss in class.

The Pālas

After Harṣha's death, the Bengal region fell into disorder until, according to an inscription, the people chose Gopāla in 750 CE to restore stability; he was the first king of the **Pāla** dynasty, which soon ruled over much of eastern India. His successor, **Dharmapāla,** expanded the Pāla Empire over much of eastern and northern India. He became known as a great patron of Mahāyāna Buddhism (see Chapter 'India and Her Neighbours' in this textbook), founding major monasteries such as Vikramaśhilā (in present-day Bihar) and Somapura (in present-day Bangladesh). Besides, just like Harṣha, the Pālas continued to patronise Nālandā (see Chapter 7, 'The Gupta Era' in Part 1 of this textbook). Those large monasteries were, in effect, the universities of those times and attracted numerous students, sometimes from far away, even beyond India.

Fig. 3.9. Crowned Buddha, Bihar, Pāla Empire, 10th–11th centuries

The Pāla Empire flourished economically thanks not only to internal trade, but also through brisk maritime trade through its seaports on the east coast, which provided pathways to Southeast Asia (see 'India and Her Neighbours' for some details). Though the empire later declined, it left a lasting legacy of strong governance and learning in parts of eastern and northern India.

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THINK ABOUT IT

Some historians state that Dharmapāla was Buddhist; he certainly patronised Buddhist learning and institutions. But we should keep in mind that in ancient India, the concept of religion was more fluid than it is today, and except perhaps for monks and nuns, people could feel at ease with various belief systems and practise different modes of worship at the same time. Indeed, people often did not regard belief systems involving Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism as separate, but rather as branches of a common philosophical tree. Besides, rulers often took pride in patronising several schools of thought; we saw the case of the Guptas in Part 1 of this textbook, and Harṣha gives us one more example of such broad-mindedness. Similarly, several successors of Dharmapāla, though still patronising Buddhist institutions, were said to be devotees of Śhiva. The Rāṣhṭrakūṭas (p. 71) and other rulers will provide more examples of this.

A university with scholars as 'gatekeepers'

Dharmapāla founded Vikramaśhilā in the late 8th century on the banks of the Ganga. It remained a great centre of learning for more than four centuries. The university had six colleges, monasteries, temples, lecture halls, and a vast library. Nearly 3,000 scholars studied subjects such as grammar, logic, Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, learning and rituals. Admission was highly selective as each college had a *dvārapaṇḍita* ('scholar gatekeeper') who tested students before allowing them entry. Vikramaśhilā was especially known for its ties with Tibet; one of its famous teachers travelled to Tibet, translated Sanskrit works into Tibetan and played a major role in shaping Tibetan Buddhism (also called Vajrayāna Buddhism, see Chapter 'India and Her Neighbours' in this textbook).

Such important centres of learning — there were hundreds, if not thousands, spread across India — kept alive and enriched India's long-standing knowledge traditions.

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As we will see in the next chapter, Vikramaśhilā was plundered and destroyed by Bakhtiyār Khiljī in the 12th century.

Fig. 3.10. The cover of a manuscript from Vikramaśhilā, depicting five different aspects of the Buddha

The Gurjara-Pratīhāras

This dynasty, founded in the mid-8th century CE by Nāgabhaṭa I, probably originated from western India ('Gurjara' referred to a region between Gujarat and Rajasthan). As we will see later in this chapter, it gained fame for pushing back Arab invasions into northwest India. Their early capital was Bhillamāla (modern Bhinmal in western Rajasthan); it seems to have shifted later to Ujjayinī.

In the 9th century, the celebrated **Pratīhāra** ruler, King **Bhoja**, a devotee of Viṣhṇu, built an empire stretching from Punjab and Kathiawar (or Saurashtra) in the west to Kannauj in the east, controlling most of north India. Bhoja was also known as 'Mihira' (a name of the Sun) and Ādi Varāha (Varāha is an avatar of Viṣhṇu in the form of a boar, see Fig. 3.11), among other designations.

Fig. 3.11. A Gurjara-Pratīhāra silver coin (about 2 cm in diameter) depicting Varāha, an avatar of Viṣhṇu

However, a century later, the Gurjara-Pratīhāras suffered the destruction of Kannauj by Rāṣhṭrakūṭa rulers, which hastened the disintegration of their empire; it was finally eliminated in the early 11th century by the Ghaznavids, whom we will meet in the next chapter.

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Fig. 3.12. A view of the Kailaśhanātha temple (also commonly known as Kailash temple), carved out of the hillside at Ellora; the temple is not a construction but a gigantic sculpture.

The Rāṣhṭrakūṭas

In the mid-8th century, **Dantidurga** became the first independent **Rāṣhṭrakūṭa** ruler when he overthrew the Chālukyas in the Deccan (whom we will meet later in this chapter). The Rāṣhṭrakūṭas shifted their power centre to present-day Karnataka, with their capital at Mānyakheṭa (modern Malkheda) and were one of the most dominant powers for nearly two centuries, their empire spanning much of the subcontinent. Dantidurga's successors campaigned successfully in north India, briefly occupying Kannauj.

We should not imagine that the kings of such dynasties were constantly at war. In fact, they found time and resources to create wonders. The Rāṣhṭrakūṭa king Krishna I got the magnificent Kailaśhanātha temple, the largest rock-cut temple in India (Fig. 3.12), carved out of a hillside at Ellora (in present-day Maharashtra). The Rāṣhṭrakūṭas equally patronised Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain schools of thought, and encouraged learning and literature in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Kannada.

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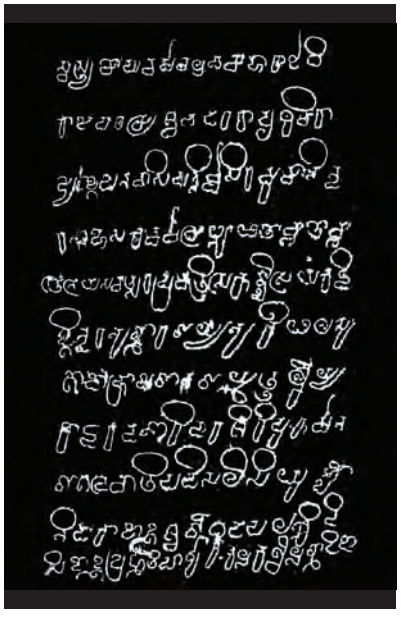

In the 9th century, another Rāṣhṭrakūṭa ruler, **Amoghavarṣha I,** took on the title 'Nṛipatunga' or 'peak of kings'. Despite frequent wars with neighbouring kingdoms, including those of the dynasties we surveyed above, he managed to ensure peace and prosperity in his empire — and stability, since his reign lasted for 64 years! Amoghavarṣha Nṛipatunga is sometimes called a 'Jain king' as he was strongly drawn to Jainism; however, he also patronised Hindu temples. He was a fine poet too, who composed works in Sanskrit and Kannada.

<< Fig. 3.13. Inscription of the Rāṣhṭrakūṭa emperor Amoghavarṣha Nṛipatunga in a village temple of Karnataka. It is written in old Kannada script.

DON'T MISS OUT

'Nrupatunga Road' in central Bengaluru, home to several government buildings and institutions, is named after Amoghavarṣha I.

THINK ABOUT IT

Al-Masūdī, a 10th-century Arab historian and traveller from Baghdad, gave high praise to a Rāṣhṭrakūṭa ruler: "His troops and elephants are innumerable. ... There is none among the rulers of Sindh and Hind who in his territory respects the Muslims [as he does]. In his kingdom, Islam is honoured and protected. And, for them, mosques and congregational mosques, which are always full, have been built for offering prayers five times."

What does this tell us about the Rāṣhṭrakūṭas?

While these three powerful dynasties — the Pālas, the Gurjara-Pratīhāras, and the Rāṣhṭrakūṭas — were involved in the tussle over Kannauj, that is, over central India and the Gangetic plains, other powers rose and fell in other parts of India. It is not possible to survey them all; let us briefly visit a few.

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Kashmir

Far to the north, in the mid-8th century, a new power was stirring in the Himalayan kingdom of Kāśhmīra — present-day Kashmir. Apart from inscriptions and coins, we learn about its successive rulers from Kalhaṇa, who authored *Rājatarangiṇī* — literally 'the River of Kings' (see the Box below). Among the many kings and a few queens whose rule Kalhaṇa describes, Lalitāditya Muktāpīda of the **Kārkoṭa** dynasty is seen as a firm ruler. After him, however, Kashmir's political scene experienced many internal conflicts and shifts of power, including some rulers seizing the throne by force. In the late 10th century, for instance, Queen Diddā consolidated her power through strategic alliances but also, according to Kalhaṇa, by ruthlessly eliminating rivals, including her own grandsons. She founded a few towns, built several temples, and restored many more.

DON'T MISS OUT

Kashmiri scholar and poet Kalhaṇa composed the epic poem *Rājatarangiṇī* in Sanskrit in the 12th century. In it, he narrated the history of Kashmir's ruling dynasties from its beginnings to his own time.

Kalhaṇa also spells out his approach to history in these words: "My effort is to give a connected account where the narratives of past events have become fragmentary in many respects. ... I have examined eleven earlier works composed by former scholars containing the chronicles of kings ... And by consulting inscriptions relating to temple consecrations, royal grants, laudatory records, and other written works, I have overcome many difficulties caused by errors."

Through all these depictions, Kalhaṇa's purpose was not merely to record history as he understood it, but also to highlight the rulers' ethical values — or lack of them, as the case may be — so as to draw moral lessons from history. He wrote, "Those who are intent on harassing their subjects perish with their families; on the other hand, fortune waits on even the descendants of those who reinstate order where there is chaos."

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LET'S EXPLORE

Form groups in your class to discuss the following questions, then compare the groups' answers.

→ What qualities does Kalhaṇa think a historian should have?

→ What do these lines reveal about his method of gathering information? In what ways does it resemble or differ from the way history is currently written?

→ Kalhaṇa also writes, "That noble-minded poet is alone worthy of praise whose words, like that of a judge, remain free from love or hatred in relating the facts of the past." What does he mean by 'free from love or hatred'? How would meeting this condition make a historian more reliable?

LET'S EXPLORE

→ According to tradition, Ādi Śhankarāchārya, the 8th-century scholar and teacher of the *advaita vedānta* school of philosophy, visited the hill shown in this sketch;

Fig. 3.14. A 19th-century sketch of the Shankaracharya Hill (also known as Takht-i-Sulaiman, anciently called Gopādri Hill) overlooking the Kashmir valley near Srinagar, with the Jhelum River meandering below and Himalayan peaks in the background.

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the stone temple at the top is known as Shankaracharya temple or Jyeshteshwara temple.

→ Śhankarāchārya taught that *brahman* is the ultimate reality or the pure consciousness, and that the world as we perceive it is *māyā* or illusion. He established four *maṭhas* (monasteries and centres of learning) at Badrinath, Puri, Dwarka, and Sringeri. Mark the location of these cities on a map; why do you think he chose four different corners of India rather than more central locations?

Despite Kashmir's mountainous geography, throughout history the kingdom remained well connected to the political and cultural developments elsewhere in India. During the period we consider here, Kashmir was a major centre for Sanskrit learning, philosophy, and the arts. A school of thought called Kashmir Śhaivism produced several great scholars, such as **Abhinavagupta**, whose works on philosophy, poetry, arts and aesthetics had a vast influence across India. Kashmir also served as a crucial bridge for Buddhist scholarship, with scholars, monks and texts traveling between Kashmir and other parts of northern India, Tibet and Central Asia. Kashmiri artisans, sculptors, and manuscript painters were in demand across north India and beyond. In short, the region's intellectual and artistic exchanges linked it closely with the cultural life of the entire subcontinent.

Fig. 3.15. Standing Śhiva, Kashmir, 8th century

The Deccan and Beyond

We mentioned the Deccan Plateau in a few other chapters. Together with the southernmost tip of the subcontinent, it was equally alive during this time, and we have already surveyed the Rāṣhṭrakūṭas. Do you remember Queen Prabhāvatī Gupta of the Vākāṭakas (Chapter 7 of Part 1 of this textbook)? Once that dynasty came to an end, several mighty kingdoms were locked in a contest for supremacy (Fig. 3.16).

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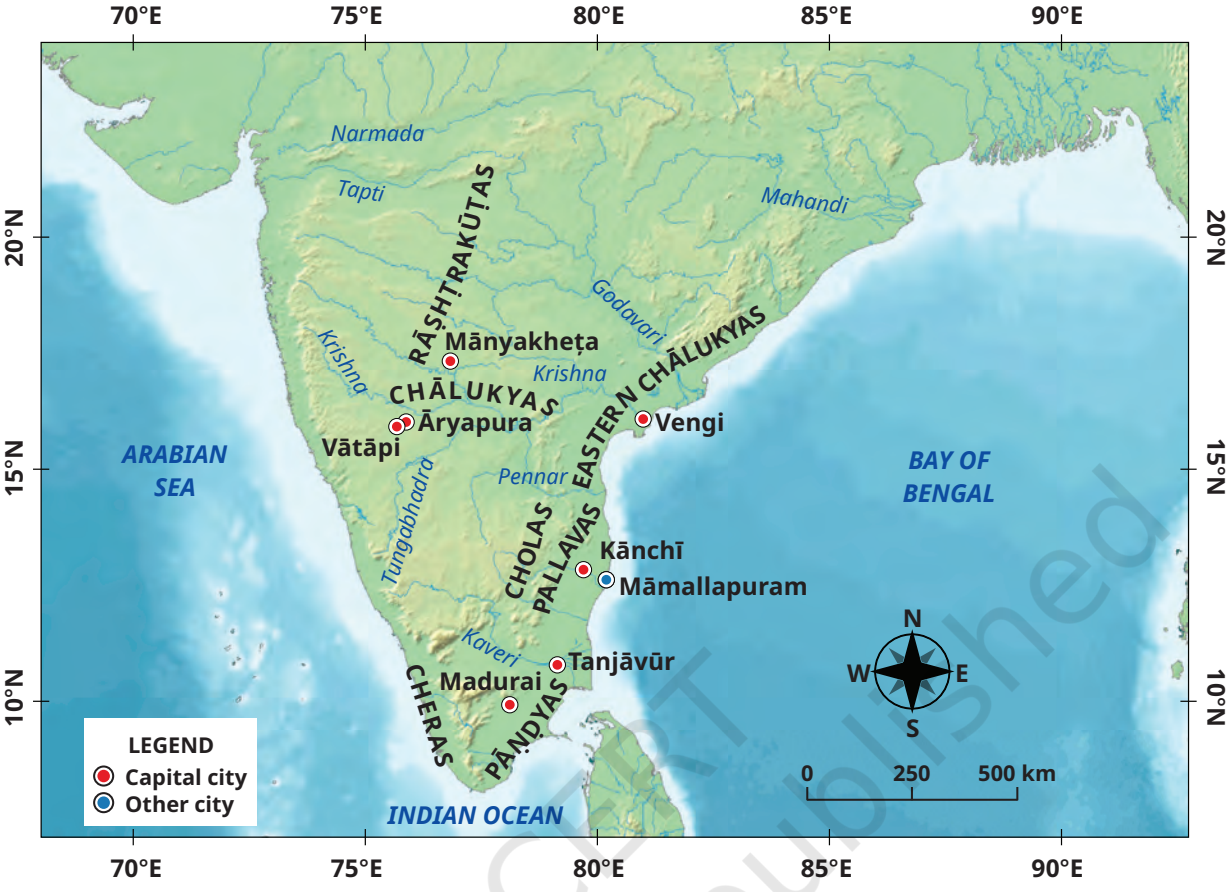

Fig. 3.16. A simplified map of the main kingdoms in the Deccan and southern India during this period.

The Chālukyas

In the mid-6th century CE, Pulakeśhin I founded the **Chālukya** dynasty. Earlier in this chapter, we met his grandson, Pulakeśhin II, who not only stood in the way of Harṣha's southward ambitions, but also considerably expanded the Chālukya kingdom. His capital was Vātāpi — present-day Badami in Karnataka, famous for its complex of magnificent Hindu and Jain cave temples.

A little further away, the earlier Chālukya capital, Āryapura (later known as 'Ayyavole', present-day Aihole), is home to over a hundred Hindu, Buddhist and Jain temples. One of them, a 7th-century Jain temple atop Meguti Hill, displays on its east wall a lengthy Sanskrit inscription in praise of the Chālukyas, especially King **Pulakeśhin II** (Fig. 3.17). Its author, the court poet Ravikīrti, records Pulakeśhin II's victories over Harṣha

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and several rival kingdoms in a highly poetical style. But this inscription is not free from exaggerations, as some of the 'facts' it presents are contradicted by other inscriptions! Let us note, however, that Xuanzang visited the Chālukya kingdom on his way to the South, and mentioned that Pulakeśhin II's "beneficent actions are felt over a great distance and his subjects obey him with perfect submission."

Fig. 3.17. The Meguti temple at Aihole (partly restored). The red arrow points to a stone slab bearing a long inscription in praise of the Chālukyas.

Still, there is no doubt that in the early 7th century the most of India was dominated by two great imperial powers — Harṣhavardhana north of the Vindhyas and Pulakeśhin II south of them. However, Pulakeśhin II eventually tasted defeat at the hands of the Pallavas of Kānchī. By the mid-8th century, the Rāṣhṭrakūṭas had replaced the Chālukyas in the Deccan, as we saw earlier. A later revival of the dynasty in the west, from the 10th century onward, is known as the **Western Chālukyas** of Kalyāṇī, their new capital (modern Basavakalyan in northern Karnataka). We will meet them again in the next chapter.

As the Chālukya empire of Badami declined, its eastern branch asserted independence and expanded its power in the eastern Deccan. They are known as the **Eastern Chālukyas** and ruled from Vengi in present-day Andhra Pradesh (see Fig. 4.10 in the next chapter). They often clashed with the Rāṣhṭrakūṭas,

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experiencing both victories and defeats, as well as occasional alliances. The Eastern Chālukyas promoted several Hindu and Jain sects, as well as Buddhist centres; Telugu and Kannada literature flourished under their rule.

The Pallavas

In the Grade 7 Part 1 textbook, we saw the emergence of the **Pallavas.** With its capital at Kānchī (or Kānchipura, present-day Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu, Fig. 3.16), the dynasty reached its peak in the 7th century under Mahendravarman I and his son **Narasimhavarman I**. The latter was also known as 'Mamalla', which means 'wrestler' or 'warrior'; indeed, it was he who defeated Pulakeśhin II and went on to capture Badami. However, he retreated, keeping the Tungabhadra River as an unwritten boundary between the two powers. He also sent a naval expedition to Sri Lanka to help a Sinhalese prince recover his lost throne.

Kanchipuram was not only an important cultural centre but also an economic hub, with trade in goods such as spices, textiles (including silk), ivory and other luxury goods. The Pallavas developed trade relations not only with Sri Lanka but also with much of Southeast Asia via several seaports, in particular Māmallapuram (also known as Mahabalipuram, see Fig. 3.16), where ancient Chinese, Persian, and Roman coins were found during excavations.

We meet Xuanzang again in Kānchī, who speaks of the existence of 100 Buddhist monasteries with 10,000 priests (figures likely exaggerated) and also mentions 80 Hindu temples and the presence of many Jains. In his opinion, "the people are deeply attached to the principles of honesty and truth, and highly esteem learning."

The Pallavas created many temples and other structures (Fig. 3.1). At Māmallapuram, elaborate rock-cut caves and **monolithic** temples were carved in a distinctive style, depicting deities (Fig. 3.18) or illustrating scenes associated with the Mahābhārata. The Pallavas were patrons of Jain, Vaishnavite and Shaivite schools of thought. They promoted

Monolithic: Made of a single ('mono') stone or rock ('lithic').

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Fig. 3.18. A granite relief at Māmallapuram depicting goddess Durga about to slay the buffalo demon Mahiṣhāsura.

both Sanskrit and Tamil literature and hosted great poets such as Daṇḍin, who wrote elaborate Sanskrit poetry; Mahendravarman I himself was a fine poet who left a satirical Sanskrit play.

LET'S EXPLORE

Note this panel's (Fig. 3.18) highly dynamic three-dimensional composition, expressing Durga's confident assault on the demon.

- → Can you identify some of Durga's many weapons? And her *vāhana*?
- → What are the main differences between her attendants and the demon's attendants?
- → What does the demon's slanted posture and general attitude indicate?

The Pallavas ruled over much of northern Tamil Nadu and southern Andhra Pradesh until the late 9th century, when they were finally overthrown by the Chola king **Aditya I.**

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Fig. 3.19. A panel depicting warriors in a battle (Airavatesvara temple, Tamil Nadu).

Further South

Nearly a millennium before our period, the Pāṇḍya, Chola and Chera kingdoms were mentioned in an edict of Aśhoka as his southern neighbours; they also figured in the Sangam literature (the earliest collections of Tamil poetry), and we first mentioned them in Part 1 of this textbook (see 'The Age of Reorganisation', in particular Fig. 6.14). Then they seemed to disappear, eclipsed by other powers. Now they reemerge (Fig. 3.16), shaping the South's political and cultural life — and often at war with each other.

The **Pāṇḍyas** rose to power by the 6th century. Allied with the Chālukyas and the Pallavas, they controlled much of southern Tamil Nadu and, for brief periods, northern parts of Sri Lanka. Their coins and inscriptions attest to maritime trade with Southeast Asia via ports such as Korkai. Their capital was Madurai, a vibrant cultural centre. They built many temples, created rock-cut temples, and patronised poets; a copper plate mentions their translation of the Mahābhārata into Tamil (which unfortunately has not survived). In the 10th century, the mighty Cholas swept them aside, but they would re-emerge some three centuries later.

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Meanwhile, along the Kerala coast, the **Cheras**, also known as Chera Perumals, maintained their independence despite their neighbours' military power.

Then came the **Cholas,** reborn under Vijayālaya in the 9th century. From his new capital at Tanjāvūr (now spelt 'Thanjavur'), he laid the foundation for a strong and prosperous kingdom. His son **Aditya I** expanded it by defeat-ing the Pallavas, bringing most parts of present-day Tamil Nadu and parts of southern Andhra Pradesh under Chola control.

The Cholas ended up building one of the largest empires in south Indian history, known for its elaborate and efficient administration, its powerful navy, and grand temples. They patronised arts such as sculpture (Fig. 3.19 and 3.20) and architecture, and promoted Tamil as well as Sanskrit literatures; their inscriptions make use of both languages. The fertile Kāveri delta along with efficient irrigation techniques ensured a steady agricultural output and contributed to the prosperity of the empire's heartland. As Chola dominance in south India lasted until the 13th century, we will meet them again in the next chapter.

Fig. 3.20. An early Chola bronze sculpture of Naṭarāja or 'Lord of dance', an aspect of Śhiva symbolising the dance of creation and destruction of the universe.

DON'T MISS OUT

During this period, inscriptions began using both Sanskrit and regional languages simultaneously. In land grants, the ruler and his dynastic history were often praised in Sanskrit, while the operative details of the grant were recorded in the local language. Why do you think such inscriptions were written in two languages?

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Other Developments

We have so far placed more emphasis on the rise and decline of the leading political powers of this period. What happened to the society in the meantime?

Polity and administration

As we saw several times, the fall of large, unified empires gave way to smaller, decentralised kingdoms. Kings like the Chālukyas and Rāṣhṭrakūṭas ruled their core regions directly, but governed other regions through subordinate rulers called *sāmantas* — the equivalent of tributaries or vassals. These *sāmantas* were indispensable, as they led armies and managed local administration. Yet, their loyalty could be fragile, especially when they felt that the empire's central authority was weakening. Some, like the Rāṣhṭrakūṭas, once *sāmantas* under the Chālukyas, eventually grew powerful enough to overthrow their overlords.

Directly controlled territories were divided into provinces (*bhuktis* or *rāṣhṭras*), districts (*maṇḍalas*) and villages, with specific officials at every level. Villages, the lowest administrative units, were overseen by headmen, accountants, and local committees, and remained largely self-governed.

Fig. 3.21. A Chola inscription in an early Tamil script (Bṛihadīśhvara temple, Thanjavur)

By the 9th century, south India saw the rise of assemblies at several levels. Let us recall, for example, the elaborate 10th-century inscriptions of the Cholas at Uttaramerur (or Uthiramerur) detailing the selection process of members to the village *sabhā* (see Part 1 of this textbook, Chapter 'From the Rulers to the Ruled'). This showed the long continuity of democratic traditions in India, dating back 1,500 years to the *janapadas*.

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Trade, economy and urbanisation

During this period, the land grant system that had begun under the Guptas expanded greatly. Kings, chiefs, royal family members, and vassals gave land to individuals, communities, and religious establishments, creating a new class of landholders. Many of these holders did not till the land themselves, suggesting that powerful intermediaries often exploited peasants, as several texts and inscriptions allude to.

Many grants aimed to bring uncultivated land under cultivation, expanding agriculture and crop diversity. Classical texts on agricultural techniques (see 'The Story of Indian Farming' in this textbook) reflect this era's emphasis on farming. Many small-scale and some large state-supported irrigation works were undertaken. The Pallavas, for example, built numerous tanks in Tamil Nadu, many of which are still functional today. Many inscriptions record the sponsorship of a well, a pond, or a tank, thereby elevating the donor's social status. With better irrigation and agricultural growth, cash crops thrived, supporting agro-based crafts and industries.

Fig. 3.22. A 7th-century hero stone at Eduthanur, a village in Tamil Nadu. The inscription praises this local chief who, along with his loyal dog, fought cattle thieves, both of them losing their lives. (The chief's and even the dog's names are given in the inscription.)

Alongside agriculture, trade and markets flourished in regional trade centres. Small traders handled local trade, while ship-owning merchants conducted long-distance commerce. From the 8th century onward, India's west coast saw brisk shipping with ports in present-day Iran, Iraq, and Africa's east coast, while India's east coast connected with Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia and all the way to Chinese ports (see Fig. 2.2 earlier in this textbook). A similar activity prevailed on the east coast under the Cheras; a set

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of copper-plate inscriptions significantly refers to the presence of Christian, Muslim and Jewish traders from West Asia, showing again how India was a hub of international trade.

Overall, Indian society remained largely rural and agrarian during this period. Although some historians have suggested urban decline during this period, the evidence paints a different and more complex picture. In north India, most older cities remained occupied, while new ones emerged; Xuanzang noted the decline of Kauśhāmbī and Śhrāvastī, but described thriving cities like Sthāneśhvara, Kānyakubja, and Kāśhī. In south India, cities continued to flourish as political, economic, and religious hubs, with temples acting as centres of commerce and ports fuelling maritime trade.

LET'S REMEMBER

We briefly saw the rise of local merchant **guilds** or associations (see 'The Rise of Empires' in Part 1 of this textbook). They continued to play a significant role, comprising traders, artisans, and moneylenders, and supporting religious and charitable activities. Inscriptions detail their structure and functions. In south India, two major merchant guilds operated prominently: one was active in coastal and inland trade, while the other became the largest inter-regional merchant association.

Social life

During this period, Indian society grew more complex and hence cannot be reduced to a simple description. The traditional *jātis* (see 'New Beginnings: Cities and States' in Part 1 of this textbook) multiplied, with many new ones based on occupation or region. This created communities in which most people married within their group. Some local tribes, border populations, foreign migrants, and occupational or religious groups were absorbed into the *varṇa-jāti* system, while some communities (such as foreign traders) remained as outsiders.

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Much of the data on the *jātis* comes from texts, and some from inscriptions, but overall there are many gaps and unanswered questions. Moreover, the system varied widely across regions, showing that *varṇa* and *jāti* were flexible rather than rigid. For instance, several sources indicate that the Pālas and the Kākatīyas (whom we will meet in the next chapter), among other rulers, were originally Śhūdras (the *varṇa* of labourers, craftspeople, etc.), but in the course of time, they would have been regarded as Kṣhatriyas (the *varṇa* of rulers and warriors).

At the same time, terms like *aspṛiśhya* (literally, 'not to be touched') appeared in a few texts, pointing to discrimination against some communities regarded as 'impure'. This is confirmed by other sources, such as Xuanzang, who noted, "Butchers, fishers, dancers, executioners, and scavengers, and so on, have their abodes without the city. ... Their houses are surrounded by low walls, and form the suburbs."

Despite such divisions, different *varṇas* and *jātis* often functioned cooperatively, as they depended on each other's work and function, at least at the economic level. We will also see below the so-called 'Bhakti Movement', which cut across all strata of the society; several bhakti saints, for instance, were Śhūdras.

THINK ABOUT IT

How does a professional group transform into a *jāti?* Such a process was complex and could vary from region to region. Let us look at one example.

The Kāyasthas, historically known as scribes or clerks, were initially a professional group open to different *varṇas*. In the 10th century, they became a distinct *jāti*. In parts of Bengal, certain Brāhmaṇa surnames such as Vasu, Ghosha, Datta, and Dama, later came to be associated with Kāyasthas, indicating a fusion of Brāhmaṇa and non-Brāhmaṇa families. Over time, they married mainly within their group, forming the Kāyastha *jāti*.

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As regards the position of women, it would also vary widely from one region to another and from one social layer to another. It is however interesting to note that in his *Harṣhacharita*, Bāṇabhaṭṭa showed women participating in many economic and social activities, working in agriculture and crafts, and, in courts, serving as entertainers, musicians, storytellers, and attendants. Many inscriptions record women making offerings to temples or getting water structures constructed.

DON'T MISS OUT

During this period, several queens ascended to the throne. While most dynasties favoured male heirs (*yuvarājas*), some, like the Bhauma-Karas in present-day Odisha, saw multiple female rulers, the most notable being Tribhuvana Mahadevi I in the 9th century. She strengthened the dynasty, suppressed rebellions, demonstrated strong administrative skills, patronised Hindu and Buddhist institutions and temples, and issued land grants under the title 'Paramabhaṭṭārikā Mahārājādhirāja Tribhuvana Mahādevī', which means 'supreme sovereign empress, great queen of the three worlds'.

Cultural life

By now, we have seen several rulers patronising different schools of thought — Hindu, Buddhist or Jain — regardless of their own inclinations. Those religious traditions interacted in complex ways, sharing central concepts (such as dharma and karma), sacred spaces, artistic motifs and sometimes deities. They coexisted peacefully most of the time, despite occasional rivalries, as between Shaivites and Jainas in south India.

Around the 6th century, Tantric schools of thought emerged, emphasising rituals, meditation, mantras, and the worship of powerful deities, especially Shakti. Buddhism, partly influenced by Tantricism, thrived in eastern India, especially under the Pālas, thanks to its monastic universities that drew

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scholars from across Asia. But elsewhere, during this period, it declined as temple-based Hinduism and bhakti practices rose.

Supported by rulers and wealthy merchant communities, Jainism remained popular in western India and Karnataka. Monumental works from this period include the monolithic Bāhubalī at Shravanabelagola in Karnataka (Fig. 3.23) and the Jain cave temples at Ellora or Badami.

The Purāṇas, with their elaborate mythology and sacred geography (see 'How the Land Becomes Sacred' in Part 1 of this textbook), helped integrate local deities and regional myths into the broader pan-Indian cults, especially those of Śhiva, Viṣhṇu, Kṛiṣhṇa and various devīs. These traditions emphasised bhakti (personal devotion) over Vedic sacrifices and centred around temples, maṭhas, and pilgrimage sites.

Fig. 3.23. The 10th-century monolithic statue of Bāhubalī at Shravanabelagola (Karnataka) during a special ceremony in 2018; Bāhubalī is a revered Jain figure, depicted here in a meditation which lasted 12 years (notice the anthill behind him and the plants climbing around his legs and arms).

From the 6th century onward, these traditions crystallised into what has been called the 'Bhakti Movement'. Bhakti, as devotion addressed to a deity, did exist much earlier, but what took place now, rather than an organised movement, was a massive spread among all layers of society and across India. The initial spark came from the South, where two groups of devotees and poets produced devotional literature (in Tamil) which had an enormous impact: the 12 Ālvārs, devotees of Viṣhṇu (one of them, Āṇḍāḷ, was a woman); and the 63 Nāyanārs or Nāyanmārs, devotees of Śhiva (including three women, Fig. 3.24).

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Fig. 3.24. A statue of Kāraikāl Ammaiyār, one of the female Nāyanmār saints, who probably lived in the 6th century CE.

More bhakti saints followed in several other parts of India. They emerged from diverse social backgrounds and their poetry, composed mostly in regional languages, invoked a direct personal relationship with the divine that was open to everyone — cutting across gender and social divisions and reshaping Indian society and literature. Its impact is lingering to this day.

A galaxy of mathematicians and astronomers

The period we deal with in this chapter saw brilliant advances in science and technology. Let us look at mathematics and astronomy here, which contributed to India's renown in the ancient world.

Born in 598 CE in Bhillamāla (the first capital of the Gurjara-Pratīhāras, remember), **Brahmagupta** was an imposing figure, with remarkable achievements in mathematics and astronomy. In his major work, *Brahmasphutasiddhānta*, he introduced the rules of arithmetic operations with zero, negative numbers and fractions — the same that you now learn at school. He also pioneered new techniques for solving certain equations, establishing him as one of the founders of modern algebra. His works were translated into Persian and later Latin, contributing to the growth of mathematics in the Arab world and, later, Europe.

Other brilliant mathematicians and astronomers of this period included **Bhāskara I,** who did pioneering work in trigonometry and wrote a lengthy commentary on the *Āryabhaṭīya* and **Virahānka,** the first to establish the Virahānka-Fibonacci sequence (which you learned about in your Grade 7 Mathematics textbook). **Mahāvīra,** a Jain scholar (not to be confused with Mahāvīra, the great Jain teacher who lived over a millennium earlier), lived at the court of the Rāṣhṭrakūṭa king Amoghavarṣha Nṛipatunga and

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authored the first work of mathematics independent of astronomy. Except for him, many mathematicians of this period refined astronomical calculation techniques, particularly to predict the positions of the planets in the sky at any given time.

Many more scholars of those times could be mentioned. Together with their predecessors (see for instance Āryabhaṭa and Varāmihira in 'The Gupta Era' in Part 1 of this textbook) and their successors (see Bhāskarāchārya in the next chapter here), this constitutes an unrivalled knowledge tradition across centuries, motivated not only by a pure search for knowledge, but also by pragmatic objectives such as the preparation of reliable calendars or precise predictions of solar and lunar eclipses. As with art and literature, such a long tradition would not have been possible without royal patronage.

Foreign Invasions

For centuries, Indian rulers kept a close watch on the strategic northwestern frontier, yet the subcontinent faced many foreign invasions throughout its long history. In Part 1 of this textbook, we read about invasions by the Greeks, the Śhakas, and the Kuṣhāṇas. Let us now hear about the coming of the Hūṇas and of the Arabs.

Fig. 3.25. Twin vijayastambhas (victory pillars) of the Aulikara king Yaśhodharma at Mandsaur (only the lower portion of the pillar on the left remains standing). Inscriptions on the pillars commemorate his victory over a Hūṇa leader.

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The Hūṇas' challenge

We need to go back a little in time. The Huns were a nomadic people originating from Central Asia in the 4th century. With their horse-riding and archery skills and lightning-fast attacks, they were fierce conquerors and overcame much of Europe, until, a century later, their empire disintegrated. The **Hūṇas** mentioned in Indian literature are thought to have been a branch of the Huns. They played a part in weakening the mighty Gupta Empire, as we saw in Part 1 of this textbook, but could not affect India much at that time.

In the early 6th century, two Hūṇa leaders in succession pushed deep into the Ganga plains despite stiff resistance from several kings, until they were defeated by kings of the **Aulikara dynasty** whose capital was Daśhapura — modern-day Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh (Fig. 3.25). These successive defeats effectively ended Hūṇa power in India.

By the 7th century, the Hūṇas had assimilated into the very fabric of Indian society; many served as soldiers, others took up roles in local administrations. One inscription, for instance, records a Hūṇa serving on a temple's administration council (*goṣhṭhika*)! They adopted Sanskrit and Prakrit for their inscriptions and used Gupta-style royal titles, coin designs, and religious symbols. Some of their coins, for instance, displayed the goddess Lakṣhmī and attributes of Viṣhṇu or Śhiva.

Fig. 3.26. (Left) A coin of the Hūṇa Toramāṇa, with his name 'Tora' in Brahmi script. (Right) A coin of the Gupta emperor Skandagupta.

LET'S EXPLORE

What details do you observe in these coins (Fig. 3.26)? Why do the coins of Toramāṇa and Skandagupta appear so similar? What conclusions can you draw?

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The Arabs arrive on India's shores

Within a few years of the death of Islam's founder, Muhammad, in 632 CE, the new religion had spread far into Asia and Africa. In 637, India's western coast witnessed naval raids by Muslim Arabs on Thānā (present-day Thane), Bhārukachchha (present-day Bharuch) and Debal (a port city in the delta of the Indus), though without securing lasting territorial control. The first attempts to conquer Afghan kingdoms were also unsuccessful, as they met with fierce resistance.

However, things changed when the governor of Iraq sent an army under the command of his nephew and son-in-law, **Muhammad bin Qasim**. These forces swept into Sindh. Debal fell first, where, according to the 9th-century historian Al-Balādhurī, bin Qasim "kept up the slaughter of the inhabitants for three days" and had a "great temple … housing **idols** destroyed". From there, bin Qasim moved eastward towards Aror (also Alor, present-day Rohri in Sindh), the capital of King Dāhar. According to the *Chachnāma* (a 13th-century Persian rendering of an older Arabic account), bin Qasim declared to Dāhar, "I consider it my bounden duty to carry on this religious war, in obedience to the orders of God who says in the Koran: 'Wage war against the **infidels**'…" In a fierce battle, Dāhar, riding atop an elephant, was killed by an arrow, following which his army was routed.

Idol: A worshipped image. Because orthodox sects of Judaism, Christianity and Islam condemn the worship of idols, we prefer to use the term 'image' or Indian words such as *mūrti* or *vigraha*.

Infidel: For medieval Islam, infidels were non-Muslims, especially Hindus, Buddhists or Jains.

LET'S EXPLORE

The *Chachnāma* records that when King Dāhar was killed, his widowed queen put up a brave resistance, and when the situation became hopeless, she immolated herself along with other ladies. Another queen ordered her treasure to be distributed among the brave soldiers and inspired them to stand against the invaders.

→ What does this suggest about the way the indigenous people responded to invasions?

→ Why do you think the queen chose to give away her treasure?

→ What does this reveal about the role of women in warfare?

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Within two years of Qasim's death, Indian chiefs rebelled and regained most of the conquered territory. The Arabs did not give up easily and soon pushed into Rājputāna and the central region of Mālwā, but their gains were short-lived. An inscription at Gwalior records how the Gurjara-Pratīhāra king Nāgabhaṭa I, whom we met earlier, "crushed the large army of the powerful **Mlechchha** king."

THINK ABOUT IT

Sulaiman, a 9th-century Arab merchant and traveller, makes this comment on a Gurjara-Pratīhāra ruler: "This king maintains numerous forces, and no other Indian prince has so fine a cavalry. He is unfriendly to the Arabs ... there is no greater foe of the Muhammadan faith than he. ... He has riches, and his camels and horses are numerous. ... There is no country in India safer from robbers." Why do you think the author calls the ruler a 'foe to the Muslim faith'?

Mlechchha: This term, which originally referred to those who did not speak clearly or did not follow Vedic culture, came to refer to foreigners.

The Arabs continued to be frustrated in their advances by the stubborn resistance of Indian rulers, who sometimes forged alliances to defeat them. Kashmir's King Lalitāditya Muktāpīda, whom we met earlier, defeated an Arab chief three times, according to the *Rājatarangiṇī*. The geographer al-Istakhri observed that after three centuries of unremitting effort, the Arab dominion in India was limited to just two petty states in Sindh and Punjab. Even there, they survived only by giving up iconoclasm and using native Hindus and Buddhists (collectively called 'Budds') for political purposes.

Overall, the Arab conquest of Sindh had a limited political and religious impact compared to their conquests in other regions where Islam often replaced local institutions and led to mass conversions. In Sindh, whether for strategic reasons or by compulsion, the Arabs changed their policy: Hindus and Buddhists were allowed to rebuild temples, continue their worship, and temple priests were allowed to keep their share of revenue.

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It is worth noting that long before the rise of Islam, India and Arabia were well connected through trade, with ships sailing back and forth with the monsoon winds — indeed, the word 'monsoon' is borrowed from the Arabic *mawsim* for 'season'. Ships carried not only spices and textiles but also ideas, languages, and stories across the Arabian Sea.

THINK ABOUT IT

The table lists common everyday words, highlighting their similar pronunciation across the three languages. By comparing these sounds, you can identify words that are closely related or share common roots in all three languages. With the help of your teacher, use this observation to complete the table.

Sanskrit	Arabic	English
	sandal	sandalwood
tāmbūla	*tanbūl*	
karpūra		camphor
pippalī	*filfil*	

DON'T MISS OUT

The most significant cultural interactions are perhaps in the field of science, since, especially in the 9th century, Sanskrit texts of mathematics, astronomy and medicine were translated into Arabic, notably in Baghdad. Among many other things, the Arabs adopted India's decimal numeral system with the zero, along with the Indian numerals. Their mathematicians acknowledged the Indian origin of this revolutionary numeral system, but once transmitted to Europe by the Arabs, these numerals became known as 'Arabic numerals'. Nowadays, several dictionaries add the term 'Hindu-Arabic numerals'. You will come across this important example of cultural transmission in your mathematics textbooks.

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Taking Stock

As we stated at the start, this chapter offers only a brief survey of the main figures and developments in this turbulent period. Numerous dynasties rose and fell, battling one another, but sometimes also in alliance with one another. A few of the more powerful kingdoms rose to the status of empires, but rarely managed to cover a large part of India or to last more than a couple of centuries.

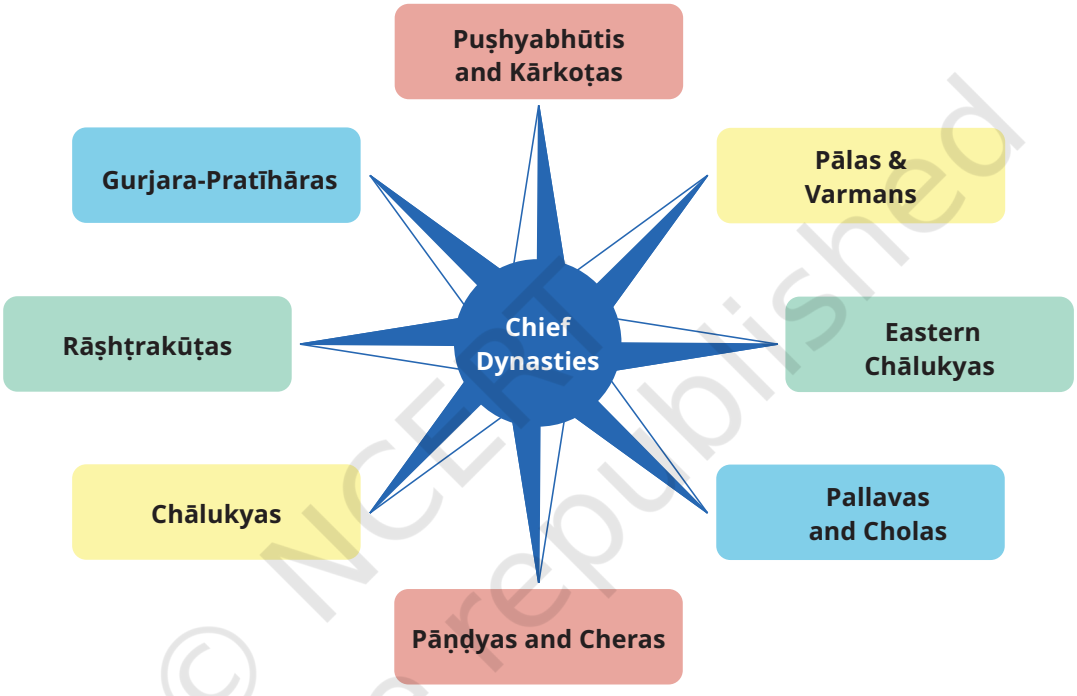

Fig. 3.27. A graphic representation of the chief dynasties covered in this chapter, with a very approximate indication of their geographical direction.

THINK ABOUT IT

We have met some 12 dynasties in this chapter. During the same period, many more existed in India: the Bhanjas, Chāpas (or Chāvaḍās), Guhilas, Kalachuris, Kadambas, Maitrakas, Maukharis, Saindhavas, Śhilāhāras, Somavaṃśhīs, Tomaras, Utpalas, Paramāras, Chāhamānas, Gangas, most of them with several branches. *You need not remember them* (except that we will meet the last three in the next chapter). The list is merely to give a sense of the depth and richness of our country's history.

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At the same time, this was a period of transformation and regional consolidation. Far from being a historical void, it witnessed the dynamic integration of new social and political groups, the flourishing of literature in Sanskrit and regional languages, and major advances in temple architecture and sculpture. New philosophical schools of thought and new religious practices spread, redefining and enriching the subcontinent's cultural and spiritual landscape, though on the same ancient foundations. Lastly, India showed resilience in the face of foreign invasions and a capacity for political renewal.

Before we move on ...

- The decline of the Gupta empire led to the rise of powerful regional kingdoms. No single power could maintain lasting supremacy, as rival states had comparable military strength, administrative systems, and strategic approaches.
- Foreign invaders who came to India often assimilated and owned her cultural traditions. However, with the advent of Islam, the situation changed. While Arab armies achieved military successes elsewhere, they struggled for a long time before making their first significant breach into the subcontinent.
- Regardless of their own inclination, rulers generally patronised Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, promoting a vibrant cultural pluralism. The period saw the rise of the Bhakti tradition, which soon spread across India.
- This period saw remarkable achievements in language, literature, art, sciences and technologies.
- The multiplication of *jātis* made the society more complex, but the *varṇa-jāti* system remained flexible.
- Trade during this period connected local economies with distant markets, both in India and abroad, spurring urban growth, fostering cultural exchange, and integrating India into broader trade networks.

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Questions and activities

1. If you lived in Kannauj during the struggle between the Pālas, the Pratīhāras and the Rāṣhṭrakūṭas, how would it change your daily life and your estimate of the rulers? Write a letter on this to your friend living in Kanchipuram.
2. Emperors and kings during this period controlled only core regions and governed other regions through subordinate vassals. What would be the advantages and the challenges of such a system?
3. In what ways were the invasions of the Hūṇas and the Arabs different in their aims, methods, and impact on the Indian subcontinent? Prepare a write-up, discuss and present it in the class.
4. Imagine you are a common citizen watching the Prayāga assembly. How would you react to Harṣha giving away most of his wealth?
5. Forming groups, let each group choose one Ālvār and one Nāyanār and prepare a biography poster or booklet. Include their life stories and a sample poem or two (in translation).
6. You will notice that our maps show only ancient names for the kingdoms' capitals and main cities. Using a pencil, mark the modern names next to their original names. Refer the current map of India and try to locate those cities on it.
7. Match the ruler or the dynasty with the city.

(a) Rāṣhṭrakūṭas	(i) Kānchī
(b) Gurjara-Pratīhāras	(ii) Tanjāvūr
(c) Cholas	(iii) Mānyakheṭa
(d) Harṣhavardhana	(iv) Ujjayinī
(e) Pallavas	(v) Kānyakubja

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CHAPTER 4

Turning Tides: 11th and 12th Centuries

It is the same India which has withstood the shocks of centuries, of hundreds of foreign invasions, of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs. It is the same land which stands firmer than any rock in the world, with its undying vigour, indestructible life. Its life is of the same nature as the soul, without beginning and without end, immortal; and we are the children of such a country.

— Swami Vivekananda

Fig. 4.1. A bas-relief depicting soldiers and elephants preparing for war (from Lakṣhmaṇa Temple, Khajuraho)

The Big Questions?

1. *Why are the 11th and 12th centuries seen as a period of transition in Indian history?*
2. *Which new powers emerged during this period? What were the essential features of their economic, military and administrative systems?*
3. *What high accomplishments in art, architecture, literature, science, etc., do we come across during this period?*

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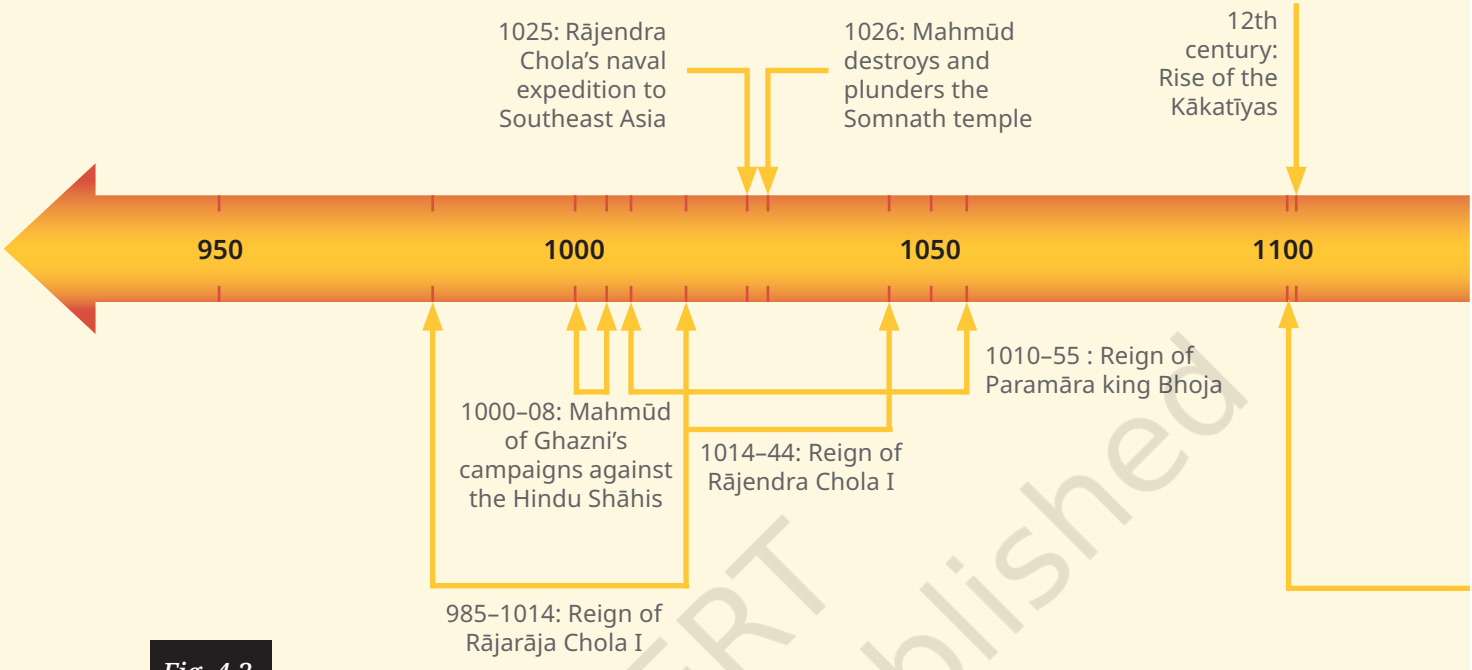

Fig. 4.2.

Turkic: Refers to peoples, languages, and cultures historically associated with a vast region stretching across Central Asia, all the way to Turkey and Siberia.

In the previous chapter, we saw the Arabs' repeated attempts to invade and dominate north India and how, in the end, those incursions had little overall impact on India. The 11th and 12th centuries tell a different story: invasions by **Turkic** powers penetrated much deeper into north India, despite stubborn resistance from native kingdoms.

We begin the chapter with an invasion and end the chapter with another, with a very brief account of the wars and destruction that came in their wake. However, many Indian rulers also flourished in this time period, successfully battling the invaders at times (when they were not battling each other), conducting naval expeditions, creating astonishing monuments or projecting India's influence abroad. Many poets, philosophers, saints and scientists belong to this period and their works continue to illuminate us even today.

In this chapter we will only explore a few of these important events, figures and accomplishments.

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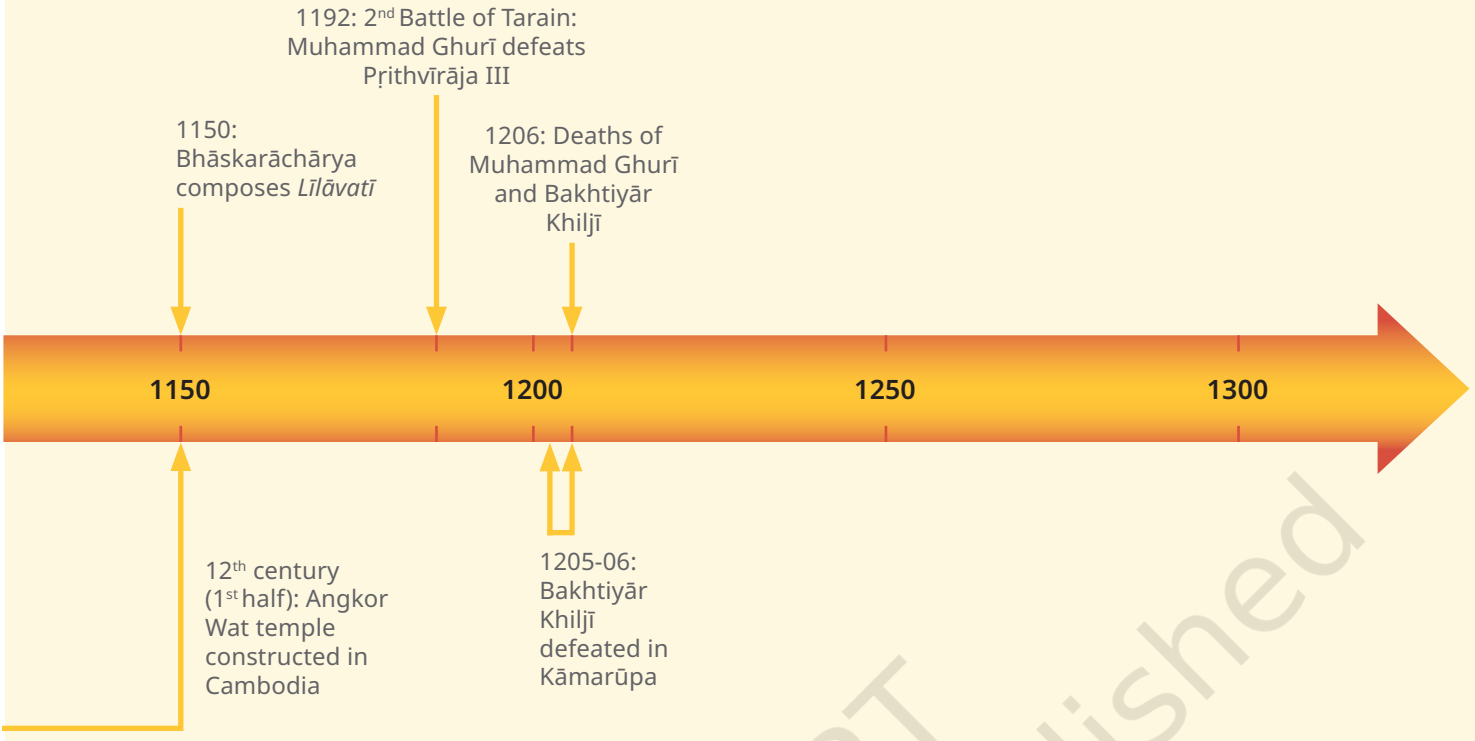

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THINK ABOUT IT

A word of caution: In Grade 8 you will read a 'Note on History's Darker Periods'. Briefly, it explains how history has recorded war, conquest and destruction more than peace, good governance or creativity, and how, the world over, historians have sometimes hesitated to draw attention to such darker periods. Our approach is that it is better to face them and analyse them so as to understand what made such developments possible and, hopefully, help avoid their recurrence in future. In addition, we should not forget that while past events cannot be erased or denied, it would be wrong to hold anyone responsible for them today.

The Ghaznavid Invasions

In the 9th and 10th centuries, several kingdoms confronted each other in present-day Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. Across those two regions and all the way to Punjab, there ruled a

powerful dynasty known as **Hindu Shāhis**. With the help of several other Indian rulers, they resisted several attempted invasions. This resistance made a difference, since they controlled the Khyber Pass, one of the main mountain passes through the Hindu Kush range (see Fig. 4.3 and 4.4). In the course of India's history, many invaders used this pass to enter the Subcontinent; for at least 2,500 years, it was also a major trade route, connecting the Subcontinent to Central Asia and beyond, and the route Buddhist scholars and monks travelled.

LET'S EXPLORE

Observe the sketch of the Khyber Pass (Fig. 4.3). What kind of terrain does it depict?

→ What advantages would it offer to an army trying to reach the Indus plains? But also, what dangers?

→ Thinking of the caravans of traders that passed through the Khyber Pass for many centuries, let's ask the same questions about the advantages as well as dangers.

Fig. 4.3. The Khyber Pass, as painted by a British military officer in about 1847.

Ultimately, however, a Turkic power — the Ghaznavids — after defeating a rival Muslim kingdom, overran the Shāhis, ruled at

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the time by **Jayapāla**. As their name indicates, the Ghaznavids' capital was Ghazna, today's Ghazni in Afghanistan. In the first decade of the 11th century, their ruler Mahmūd (often referred to as **'Mahmūd of Ghazni'**) accomplished this final conquest, first defeating Jayapāla and, in 1008, overcoming Jayapāla's son **Ānandapāla** after a long battle, despite the support Ānandapāla received from several rulers from north India. The outcome of that battle, waged in northern Punjab, meant that Mahmūd now had easy access to the Indus plains and beyond.

THINK ABOUT IT

We will meet later in this chapter the Persian scholar al-Bīrūnī, who accompanied Mahmūd in some of his campaigns. He wrote in his memoirs on India, "The Hindu Shāhiya dynasty is now extinct, and of the whole house there is no longer the slightest remnant in existence. We must say that, in all their grandeur, they never slackened in the ardent desire of doing that which is good and right, that they were men of noble sentiment and noble bearing."

What conclusions can we draw from this remark by someone in Mahmūd's entourage?

DON'T MISS OUT

Mahmūd assumed the title of 'sultan', a word of Arabic origin which means 'authority' or 'power'; in the Muslim world, it came to refer to a sovereign ruler or king. In Grade 8, we will come across sultans who established their kingdoms or 'sultanates' in India, the dominant one being the Delhi Sultanate.

In all, Mahmūd conducted 17 campaigns in India; after each one, he would return to Ghazni with huge amounts of booty. Although he met with strong resistance (from the **Chandellas** of central India, among others) and was close to defeat on a few occasions, his large army's rapid marches and daring cavalry attacks, with archers on horseback, were ultimately decisive.

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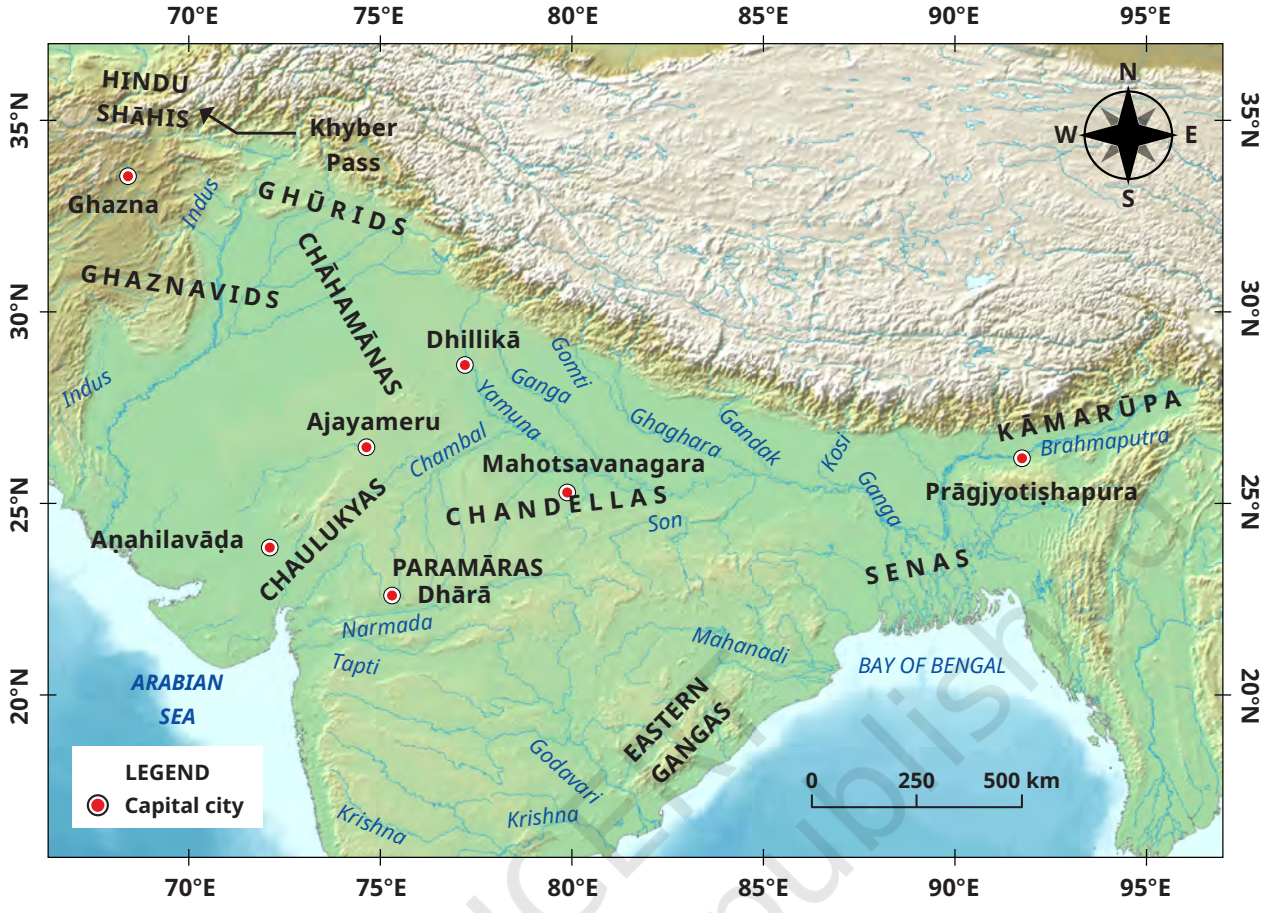

Fig. 4.4. A few dynasties in northern and central India in the 11th and 12th centuries

When Mahmūd reached Mathura (in present-day western Uttar Pradesh) in 1018, he found it to be a city of enormous wealth, with a magnificent temple overlooking the city. Mahmūd's court historian al-Utbi, who chronicled his campaigns, wrote that even "the pens of all writers and the pencils of all painters" would be unable to describe the temple's "beauty and decoration". Mahmūd destroyed it and plundered its treasure, then proceeded to Kannauj, where he took one of the last Pratihāra rulers by surprise, and looted and destroyed many temples. A few years later, another campaign took him to Gujarat and to Somnath (in present-day Saurashtra), which was then a bustling seaport. Despite strong resistance from the locals and severe losses to his army, after a few days of fighting Mahmūd gained the upper hand, destroyed the Somanātha Śhiva temple and looted its enormous treasures.

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Fig. 4.5. Ruins of a temple complex in today's Amb Shareef (northern Pakistan), built during the rule of the Hindu Shāhis

LET'S EXPLORE

In later centuries, the Somanātha temple was rebuilt and destroyed again several times; the existing temple was built in 1950 and inaugurated the next year by the then President of India, Rajendra Prasad. Why do you think it was decided to fund the construction entirely from public donations?

Mahmūd died in 1030 in Ghazni, at the age of 58. About this time, his nephew, Sālār Masūd, launched an attack on the Gangetic region. According to oral history and to a 17th-century Muslim chronicle, when he reached Bahraich (in modern-day Uttar Pradesh), the local ruler Suheldev (or Suhaldev) successfully resisted the attack and Sālār Masūd fell in the battle.

Mahmūd's campaigns involved not only destruction and plunder, but also the slaughter of tens of thousands of Indian civilians and the capture of numerous prisoners, including children, who were taken to be sold on slave markets of Central Asia. His biographers depict him as a powerful but cruel and ruthless general, keen not only to slaughter or enslave 'infidels' (that is, Hindus or Buddhists or Jains), but also to kill believers from rival sects of Islam.

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Al-Bīrūnī

Fig. 4.6. A 1973 postage stamp issued by the former Soviet Union in memory of al-Bīrūnī (Uzbekistan was then part of the Soviet Union).

Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī, a Persian scholar from Khwārizm (in present-day Uzbekistan), was a mathematician, astronomer, geographer, historian and linguist all rolled into one. He travelled widely and wrote prolifically, both in Arabic and Persian, on nearly every branch of knowledge known in his time.

Around 1017, al-Bīrūnī accompanied Mahmūd of Ghazni on his campaign into India. He learned Sanskrit, read Indian texts and conversed with Indian scholars. The result was an encyclopaedic survey of Indian religion, philosophy, literature, geography, and sciences, in which he discussed Indian intellectual achievements as best he could, often comparing them with those of Greek and Islamic traditions. In mathematics and astronomy, al-Bīrūnī compiled what he could gather from the works of Āryabhaṭa, Varāhamihira and Brahmagupta, among others. In another work, he translated into Arabic Patanjali's *Yogasūtras*, a classic text on advanced concepts and techniques of yoga.

At the same time, al-Bīrūnī noted the impact of Mahmūd's military campaigns on India's scientific traditions: "Mahmūd utterly ruined the prosperity of the country, and performed there wonderful feats, by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions. ... This is the reason, too, why Indian sciences have retired far away from those parts of the country conquered by us, and have fled to places which our hand cannot yet reach; to Kashmir, Varanasi, and other places."

Bhāskarāchārya

While the production and transmission of scientific knowledge did decline in north India a little later, they continued to flourish in other regions. Born in 1114, probably in present-day Maharashtra, Bhāskara II, better known as Bhāskarāchārya, was

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one of India's greatest mathematicians and astronomers. His family counted several scholars and astronomers. His most famous works (all in Sanskrit) are *Līlāvatī*, which uses lively riddles and problems to teach basic mathematics; *Bījagaṇita*, on more advanced algebra; and *Siddhāntaśhiromaṇi* ('Crown of Treatises on Mathematical Astronomy'), which deals with advanced astronomical calculations. Many later scholars wrote commentaries on those works, and several of them were translated into Persian during the Mughal period; as a result, his influence in India and beyond was long-lasting. It would take Europe a few centuries to rediscover some of Bhāskarāchārya's pioneering techniques.

In addition to his scientific knowledge, Bhāskarāchārya had a gift for poetry and used this talent to make his writings enjoyable to scholars and students alike. His works were full of examples, with clear explanations, demonstrations and proofs, making them favourite texts with students for centuries. Remember that you saw such examples in your Mathematics textbooks of Grade 7. Here is an example from *Līlāvatī* — see if you can find the solution!

Of a herd of elephants, half and one-third of the half went into a cave, one-sixth and one-seventh of one-sixth were drinking water from a river. One-eighth and one-ninth of one-eighth were sporting in a pond full of lotuses. And the king of the elephants was leading three female elephants. Tell me, how many elephants were there in the herd?

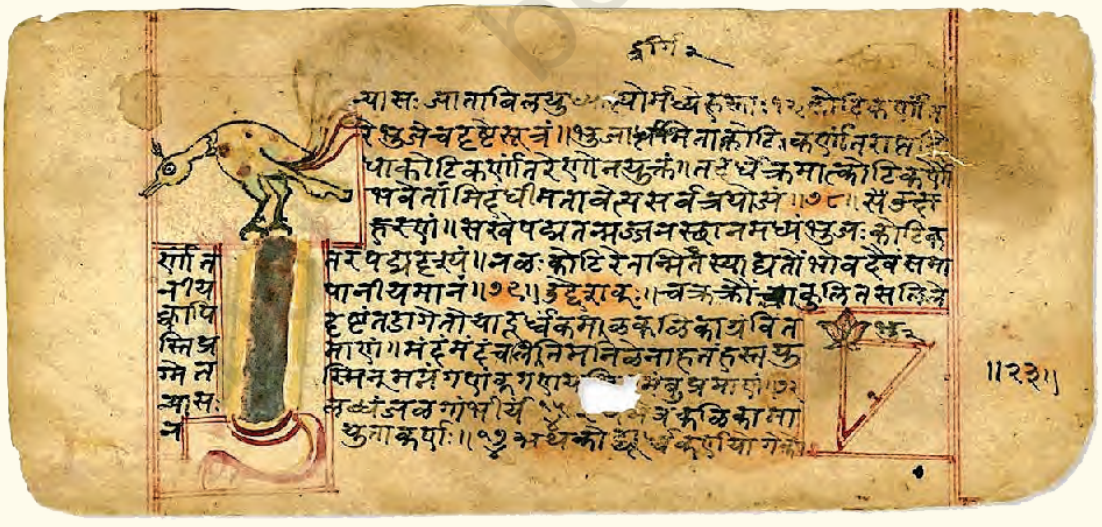

Fig. 4.7. A 17th-century manuscript illustrating another problem from Līlāvatī, with a peacock perched on top of a pillar and a snake below.

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Fig. 4.8. A painting depicting an Indian ruler brought to Mahmūd as a prisoner (manuscript of a 15th-century historical work in Persian)

As Mahmūd did not attempt to establish a permanent base in India beyond Punjab, historians have debated his motives for conducting such destructive campaigns; they have often suggested that plunder was the chief reason for his destruction of temples in India. It is true that the larger temples often held immense wealth, accumulated from the devotees' offerings over centuries, and would therefore be prime targets for plunder.

But it is also true that Mahmūd was keen to spread his version of Islam to non-Muslim parts of the world, as we find from contemporary evidence. Al-Utbi, for instance, noted, "Wherever he went, Mahmūd plundered and sacked the country until it was annihilated. He dug up and burnt down all its buildings, killed those infidels and carried away their children and cattle as booty. He mastered several other territories, and destroying their temples, their sacred buildings, built mosques instead, making the light of Islam visible." Let us also refer again to al-Bīrūnī, who, after explaining the origin of the śhivalinga worshipped

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at the Somnath temple, recorded, "The image was destroyed by the Prince Mahmūd. He ordered the upper part to be broken and the remainder to be transported to his residence, Ghazni. [A part of the image] lies before the door of the mosque of Ghazni, on which people rub their feet to clean them from dirt and wet."

Fig. 4.9. A coin issued from Lahore by Mahmūd, with one side in Arabic and the other in Sanskrit, praising Islam and Mahmūd as 'nṛipati' or king.

Eastern India

While north India bore the brunt of the Ghaznavid raids, during the 11th century the scene in eastern India was very different. After the decline of the Pālas, the **Sena dynasty** (Fig. 4.4) emerged as the dominant power over much of Bengal, with their capital at Nādīya (now the Nadia district, which shares a border with Bangladesh). Their relations with neighbouring Kāmarūpa (Assam) and Kalinga (more or less present-day Odisha) seem to have alternated between friendly and conflictual. While their predecessors, the Pālas, patronised Buddhist institutions, the Senas promoted Hindu thought and literature, hosting poets such as Jayadeva, author of the famous *Gītagovindam*, which tells the story of Kṛiṣhṇa and Rādhā.

Let us follow the coast southward, into Kalinga where we encounter the **Eastern Gangas** (Fig. 4.4), who had matrimonial alliances with the Cholas (whom we will meet soon), yet also clashed with them a few times, and with other neighbours as well. Nevertheless, by the end of the 12th century the Eastern Gangas emerged as one of the most stable powers of eastern India, with their kingdom extending 'from the Gangā to the Godāvarī,' as some of their inscriptions claim. This dynasty initiated the construction of the Jagannātha temple at Puri, and, in the mid-13th century, of the grand Sun temple at Konark.

Further South

Let us continue our journey southward. From the previous chapter, do you remember the **Western Chālukyas** (with their capital at Kalyāṇī or Kalyāṇa) and the **Eastern Chālukyas** (Fig. 4.10)? The

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former was a major power in the Deccan, its rule extending at some point to the Narmada River in the north. As the Eastern Chālukyas were gradually absorbed into the Chola sphere of influence through marriage alliances, their capital Vengi and the fertile region around it became the object of fierce wars between the Cholas and the Western Chālukyas. As a result, the Western Chālukyas faded away, while the Kākatīyas and the Hoysalas grew stronger, eventually replacing them. Let us now turn to them.

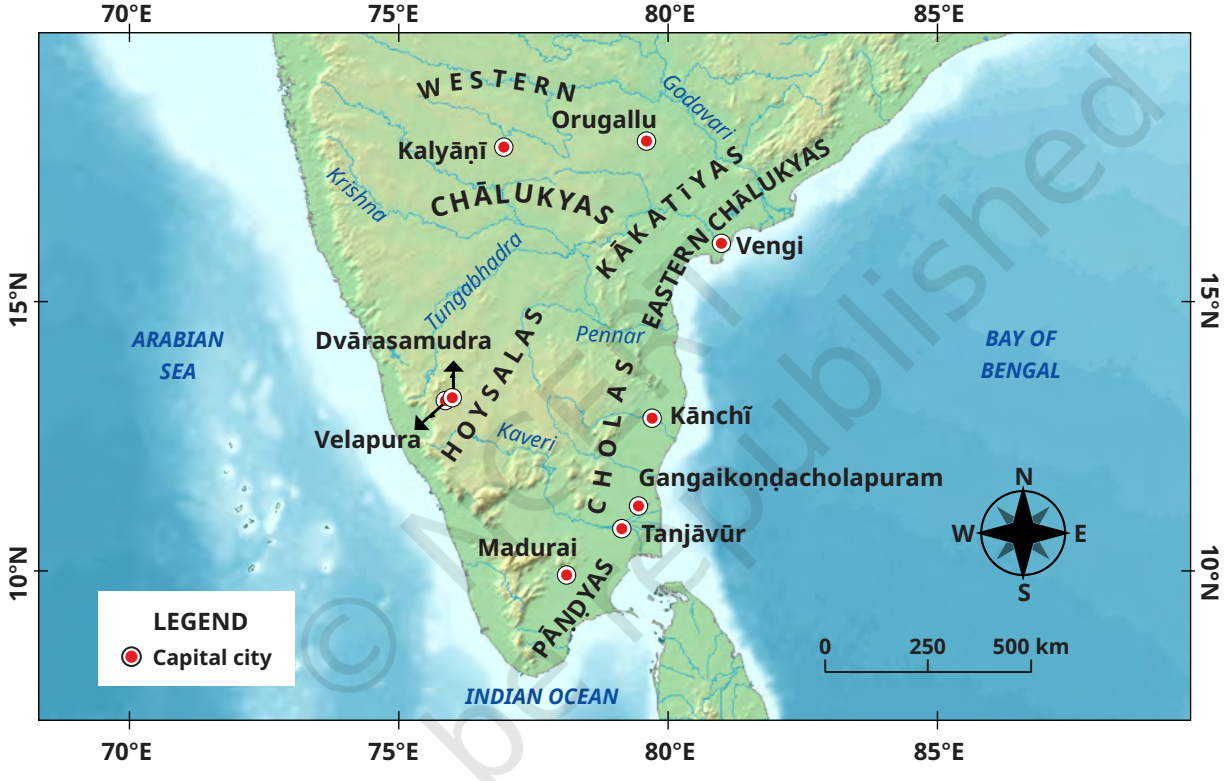

Fig. 4.10. A few dynasties of south India in the 11th and 12th centuries

The Kākatīyas

In 12th century, the **Kākatīyas** cemented their authority over much of present-day Telangana and Andhra Pradesh (Fig. 4.10), with their capital at Orugallu (today's Warangal), where they built a fort with impressive stone toraṇas or gateways (Fig. 4.11). While some of their kings composed works in Sanskrit, they also patronised Telugu literature; the Thousand Pillar temple at Hanamkonda is a fine example of their temple architecture.

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The Kākatīya rulers promoted a strong local administration based on village self-governance; they developed an efficient revenue system and an irrigation infrastructure that supported agricultural prosperity.

Fig. 4.11. A Toraṇa or gateway to the Warangal fort of Kākatīya period

The Hoysalas

The Hoysalas originated in southern Karnataka. There is an interesting legend behind the name. When their founder Sāla went to a Jain temple for worship, he found an ascetic meditating; as a tiger appeared on the scene, the ascetic said "Poy, Sāla" — which, in old Kannada language, means "strike, Sāla". Sāla promptly obeyed the ascetic and saved his life; in return, the ascetic blessed him with kingship. According to this legend mentioned in inscriptions (and depicted in several temples), the name 'Hoysala' is said to originate from the ascetic's command!

In our period, Velāpura (today's Belur) and Dvārasamudra (Halebidu) became the Hoysalas' capitals. Under King Viṣhṇuvardhana, they broke away from Chālukya overlordship, challenged the Cholas, and gradually extended their sway over most of present-day Karnataka. Their rule saw cultural and literary development in Kannada language, but their most visible legacy is their unique style of temple architecture, with intricately carved stone pillars, sculptures and panels. The temples at Belur and Halebidu are particularly famous, and are among three Hoysala temples recognised by the UNESCO as world heritage monuments.

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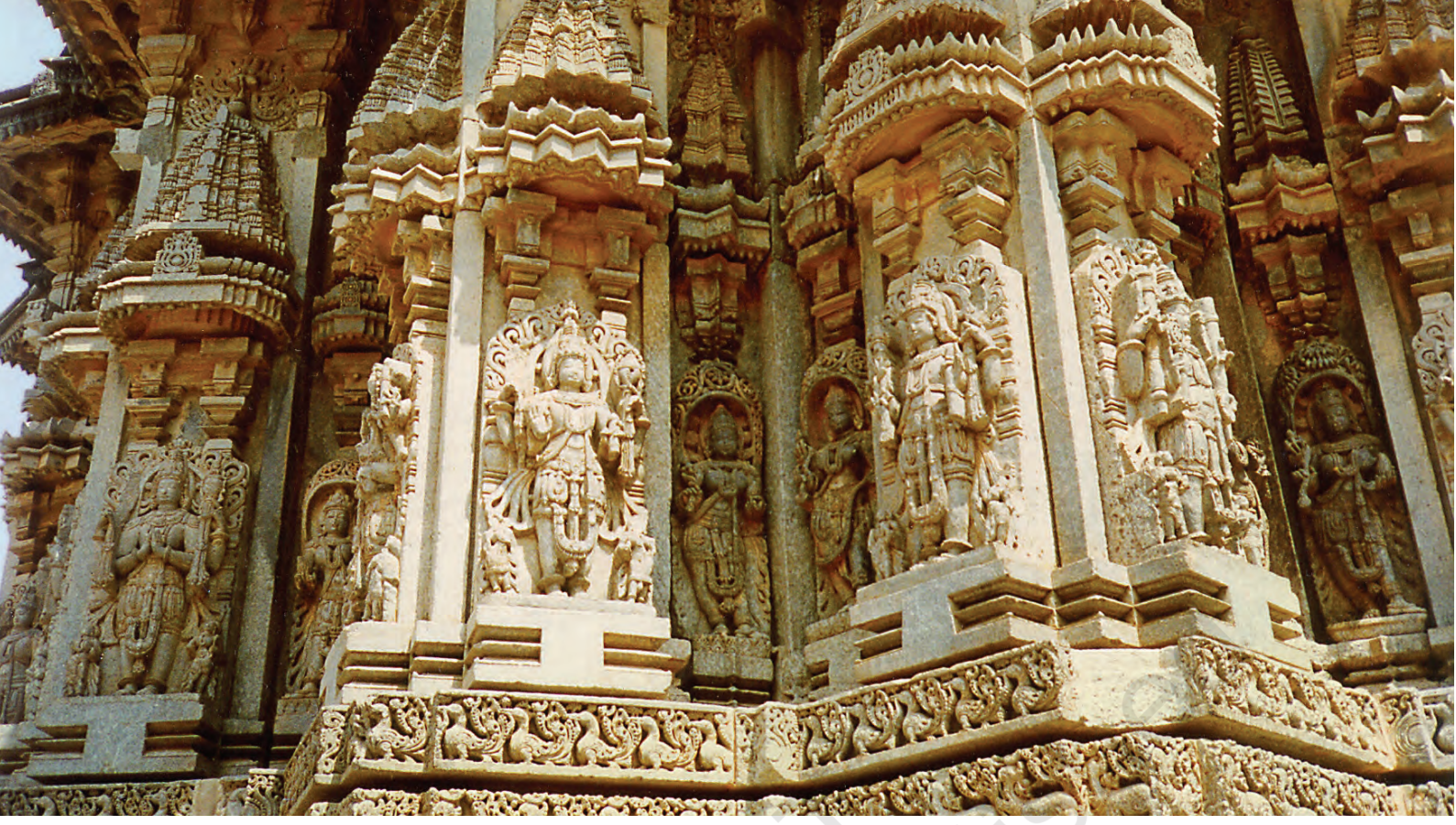

Fig. 4.12. A partial view of the Hoysala temple at Somanathapura (near Mysuru). Note the complexity of the entire design, the numerous elaborate statues, and the friezes at the bottom.

The Cholas, masters of the seas

The **Cholas**, whom we briefly met in the previous chapter, were a powerful and influential dynasty that rose to prominence in present-day Tamil Nadu, with Tanjāvūr (present-day Thanjavur), Gangaikoṇḍacholapuram, and Kānchī (present-day Kanchipuram) as their capital cities (Fig. 4.10).

From 985, **Rājarāja Chola** ruled for some three decades and conquered parts of present-day Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. His inscriptions record his conquest of 'islands of the sea', which most historians identify with the Maldives; and he conquered the northern part of Sri Lanka, including the kingdom of Anurādhapura. He built the Bṛihadīśhvara (also known as Rājarājeśhvaram, after Rājarāja) temple at Thanjavur, a masterpiece of architecture and engineering (we will visit it in Grade 8). And, although the Cholas were predominantly Shaivites, Rājarāja facilitated the construction of a Buddhist *vihāra* (monastery) at Nāgapaṭṭinam (then an important port of

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the Cholas) by the ruler of the Śhrīvijaya Empire across the Bay of Bengal (in parts of present-day Malaysia and Indonesia).

Rājarāja's son **Rājendra Chola I**, who also ruled for nearly 30 years, expanded the empire further, conquering parts of present-day Odisha and Bengal. He commemorated those victories with the title 'Gangaikoṇḍachola', that is, "the Chola who seized (or brought) Gangā" — a reference both to his campaigns in the North and to the sacredness attached to Gangā. Rājendra also expanded his father's conquest of northern Sri Lanka, which became an integral part of the Chola Empire for half a century or so, until the Sri Lankan king Vijayabāhu I managed to drive the Cholas out after several battles.

Fig. 4.13. Entrance to the temple built by Rājendra Chola at Gangaikoṇḍacholapuram. The temple commemorates his victory over north Indian rulers.

Rājendra I is celebrated for his successful naval expedition against the king of the Śhrīvijaya Empire. The conflict had its roots in the maritime trade with China: under the Cholas, trade relations with China thrived, as archaeological evidence and inscriptions confirm; Rājendra even sent a diplomatic mission to China. But one of the sea routes passed through the Strait of Malacca (a narrow strip of sea between Malaysia and the Indonesian island of Sumatra), which the Śhrīvijaya king controlled, and this created competition with the Cholas.

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Rājendra sent his navy, which defeated the Śhrīvijaya forces and captured their capital. However, he did not try to occupy the defeated empire; it was a punitive expedition, conducted with the support of many Indian merchant guilds, and it seems to have achieved its objectives.

DON'T MISS OUT

We should not conclude from Rājendra's expedition against the Śhrīvijaya Empire that the latter's relations with India were conflictual. On the contrary, there were deep cultural and generally peaceful relations between these two regions of Asia. For instance, a Śhrīvijaya ruler made donations to Nālandā and asked the Pāla king for land to create one more monastery there; the request was granted, as a copper-plate found at Nālandā recorded.

Similarly, with Sri Lanka: strong cultural links apart, Vijayabāhu I married a princess from Kalinga.

LET'S EXPLORE

Fig. 4.14. An ancient painting of Rājendra Chola with his guru (at the Bṛihadīśhvara temple)

In the painting Fig. 4.14, can you make out who is the king and who is the guru? What does the king's posture and general attitude express?

Back home, the Cholas engaged in large public works, such as roads to facilitate communications, tanks, wells and canals for irrigation, and artificial lakes. But their frequent and extensive conflicts with several neighbouring kingdoms, in particular the Western Chālukyas, the Pāṇḍyas and the rulers of Sri Lanka, drained their treasury and contributed to the decline of

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the empire. By the 13th century, the Chola empire had shrunk considerably and was finally absorbed by the Pāṇḍyas.

Back to the North

We now travel back to the north, as a second phase of foreign invasions was going to have a more lasting impact on India.

The Paramāras

The Paramāras were originally vassals of the Pratihāras and the Rāṣhṭrakūṭas; in the second half of the 10th century, they emerged as an independent power in Malwa (a region in present-day Madhya Pradesh), with Dhārā (present-day Dhar) as their capital. Their most famous king was **Bhoja**, who ruled from 1010 for almost half a century and led numerous campaigns, extending his kingdom from the Konkan region on the west coast to parts of Rajasthan; he was among the Indian rulers who sent their forces to assist the Hindu Shāhi rulers against Mahmūd of Ghazni.

After Bhoja's death in 1055, the Paramāras gradually declined, partly because of conflicts with neighbouring powers.

The scholar-king

Bhoja Paramāra should not be confused with King Bhoja of the Gurjara-Pratīhāra dynasty, whom we met in the previous chapter and who lived in the 9th century. Bhoja Paramāra was known for his efficient governance and public works. He is credited with founding of the town of Bhojpur and constructed a vast lake between Bhojpur and the city of Bhopal (whose name comes from 'Bhojpal' — the 'dam' or 'fort of Bhoja') by harnessing the waters of several rivers; it served both irrigation and water management purposes. Only a small portion of that lake,

Fig. 4.15. A modern statue of King Bhoja on the bank of the Bhojtal Lake in Bhopal

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called 'Bhojtal' remains near present-day Bhopal, while remains of earthen or stone embankments can still be seen further away. A local proverb (in Hindi) remembers the lake's original size by declaring, "If there is a lake, it is Bhopal's lake; all others are just ponds"!

Bhoja also built the impressive Bhojeshwar Temple, which remains an architectural marvel even though it was never completed.

Bhoja was a generous patron who supported scholars and promoted Sanskrit literature. Under his patronage, arts and sciences flourished, so that his capital became a renowned centre of learning that attracted scholars, poets, and artists from across India.

Bhoja himself was a noted scholar and a prolific author who wrote on a wide range of subjects. His works include *Samarāṅgaṇa Sūtradhāra* a long treatise on architecture, town planning, temple construction, sculpture and mechanical devices; treatises on governance and on Sanskrit poetics; a commentary on Patanjali's *Yogasūtras*; and texts of medicine, among other texts attributed to him.

His reputation as a wise and learned ruler became legendary, inspiring numerous stories and folk tales.

A turning point: the Ghūrids in India

As we saw, Mahmūd of Ghazni was the first notable invader of India in the period we are looking at. After him, his Ghaznavid Empire was under attack from several sides in Afghanistan and beyond, and soon disintegrated. The chiefs of Ghūr (present-day Ghor), a mountainous region in Afghanistan to the west of Ghazni, were earlier vassals of the Ghaznavids, but now seized the opportunity to take control of Ghazni and build up their power.

Their leader Muhammad, now the sultan of Ghūr (and often called '**Muhammad Ghūrī**' or 'Muhammad of Ghor'), soon brought parts of Punjab and Sindh under his rule. His attempts to expand into Gujarat failed, as he was defeated in 1178 by the Chaulukya king Mūlarāja II at the foot of Mount Abu. In another version of this battle, it was Queen Nāīkīdevī, Mūlarāja's mother,

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who led the victorious army on horseback, with her son in her lap. Merutunga, a Jain scholar from Gujarat, recorded the event in a semi-historical chronicle, but as he wrote over a century later, historians are divided as to whether the queen or her son should be credited for this victory; anyhow, sources do record Muhammad's defeat there.

DON'T MISS OUT

The **Chaulukya dynasty**, also known as the Solanki dynasty, which ruled parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan from the 10th to the 13th centuries, is distinct from the Chālukya dynasty of the Deccan, which we met in the previous chapter. Its capital was Aṇahilavāḍa, which is today's Patan. (They are also sometimes called 'Chālukyas of Gujarat'.)

Meantime, the **Chāhamānas**, also known as Chauhāns, were a powerful Rajput dynasty that arose in nearby Rajasthan and neighbouring regions. Its kings, apart from battling other Indian dynasties, often repelled invaders such as Mahmūd of Ghazni. In the 12th century, their conquests of Delhi, Haryana, parts of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, apart from most of Rajasthan, established their empire, with its capital at Ajayameru (today's Ajmer).

Pṛithvīrāja III, often known today as Prithviraj Chauhan, waged many battles with neighbouring kings, such as those of Gujarat and Malwa. In 1191, he also defeated Muhammad Ghūrī at Tarain (modern-day Taraori in Haryana), but within a year, Muhammad returned with a larger army, and the two clashed again. In this Second Battle of Tarain, which witnessed fierce fighting, Muhammad defeated Pṛithvīrāja and executed him.

Fig. 4.16. A later portrait of Pṛithvīrāja III

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Muhammad Ghūrī went on to capture Delhi. Unlike Mahmūd, who merely plundered and withdrew, he sought territorial conquest. Though he returned to Ghazni, he left behind trusted military commanders to consolidate his gains — most notably his general Qutb-ud-din Aibak, who later founded the Delhi Sultanate (as we will see in Grade 8).

DON'T MISS OUT

Delhi was a flourishing city under the Chāhamānas. Their inscriptions refer to it as 'Dhillikā', which was later shortened to 'Dhilli' and ultimately evolved into 'Delhi'.

Aibak encountered much resistance in his campaigns in north India, but was able to expand the Ghūrids' territory. His army commander Bakhtiyār Khiljī (or Khaljī) conducted campaigns in eastern India from the end of the 12th century,

Fig. 4.17. A gold coin issued in the name of 'Muhammad ibn Sām' (Muhammad Ghūrī's formal name), depicting him as a conqueror on horseback.

Fig. 4.18. Also issued by Muhammad Ghūri, this coin depicts Goddess Lakṣhmī; this motif had been widely used on coins since the Kuṣhāṇas, which is probably why Muhammad decided to adopt it.

conquering Bihar and Bengal. On his way to Bengal, he destroyed large Buddhist monasteries and universities such as Nālandā and Vikramaśhilā, collecting huge booty and slaughtering large numbers of monks. There is a consensus among historians of Buddhism that this destruction of its large centres of learning precipitated the decline of Buddhism in India, although a few other factors may have also played a role.

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LET'S EXPLORE

Writing some 60 years after Bakhtiyār Khiljī's campaign through Bihar, the historian Minhaj al-Siraj Jūzjānī, recorded in his *Tabakāt-i-Nāsirī* how Bakhtiyar's forces captured a 'fortress' and "acquired great booty." He adds, "The greater number of the inhabitants of that place were Brahmans, and all those Brahmans had their heads shaven; and they were all slain. There were a great number of books there. ... It was found that the whole of that fortress and city was a college, and in [their] tongue, they call a college *bihār*."

→ Remembering the meaning of *vihāra* and noting that Nālandā was known in ancient inscriptions as 'Nālandā Mahāvihāra', can you find two more clues in the above passage to identify the 'fortress' near the Nālandā university? (*Hint: Who do you think these 'Brahmans' actually were?)*

DON'T MISS OUT

Fig. 4.19. A partial view of Nālandā Mahāvihāra

Nālandā's famous library, spread over three multi-storey buildings, contained lakhs of manuscripts. The Chinese pilgrims Yijing and Xuanzang spent some time there, studying manuscripts and selecting many to take back to China. After Bakhtiyār Khiljī's attack, the library is said to have burned for months. Tibetan scholars, who were both teaching and studying there, fled back to Tibet with as many manuscripts as they could carry.

When Dharmasvāmin, a Tibetan monk, visited the site some three decades later, he found it half ruined. Yet, a 90-year-old teacher, Rāhula Śhrībhadra, was still instructing a class of about 70 students — perhaps Nalanda's last class ...

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As Bakhtiyār Khiljī pushed further east into Bengal around 1203–04, he caught the Sena ruler unaware at Nādīya, ending the Senas' control over much of Bengal. For reasons that are not too clear, he then decided to attempt an expedition into Tibet. However, on his way through Kāmarūpa in 1205, he was confronted by the local ruler's forces, who inflicted severe losses on his army. The local population is said to have destroyed food and fodder, in effect starving the invading army. Bakhtiyār escaped with only a handful of his men and returned to Bengal much weakened.

Muhammad Ghurī was killed in 1206; the same year, Bakhtiyār Khiljī was assassinated, apparently by his own men. Their territory in north India remained under the control of Muhammad's generals.

Governance, Trade and Cultural Life

We have seen much warfare in this period, which means that every powerful king needed to keep a sizable army. This involved considerable resources to employ the soldiers, supply them with weapons, maintain horses and elephants (and, in parts of north India, camels for transport of provisions). Powerful kingdoms therefore needed an efficient administration to collect tributes from vassals and taxes from the traders. The previous chapter described the main features of such administrations; there is no major change in this one, except with respect to Muhammad Ghūrī's system, which was more centralised and granted temporary land assignments to officers in return for revenue collection and military service. This would be further developed during the period of the Delhi Sultanate, as we will see in Grade 8.

Despite the political disturbances we have seen, India's trade with China and Southeast Asia kept growing during this period. Among other evidences, coins and pottery from those overseas regions have been found at many locations on India's west coast, which had many seaports as well as shipyards manufacturing seafaring ships. While there was a brisk trade within India and beyond, supported by a few powerful guilds, the mainstay of

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Fig. 4.20. Kandāriyā Mahādeva Temple, Khajuraho

the economy was ultimately agriculture — which remains true even today. The ancient texts often refer to agricultural produce, whether it is rice and barley in the Ganga plains and Bengal, saffron from Kashmir, spices from Kerala, ginger from Bengal, wheat from northwest India, and cotton from western India and the Deccan. Many rulers — we mentioned a few examples in the previous chapter and this one — took care of irrigation works, which could, to some extent, mitigate the vagaries of seasonal rains.

If the economy thrived, so did the arts, the literary production, science (as we saw with Bhāskarāchārya), religious life and other cultural aspects. In the previous chapter, we heard of Harṣha's Sanskrit compositions, and, in the present chapter, those of Bhoja the scholar-king. We should add here the Chālukya ruler Someśhvara III who, in the 12th century, authored *Mānasollāsa*, an encyclopaedia covering topics ranging from astronomy and architecture to music, medicine, cooking, and games — in effect, a comprehensive guide to royal life and governance, with some emphasis of the duties of kings towards their subjects. Many large temples were built in this period across India; apart from

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Fig. 4.21 & 4.22. Two huge modern statues: Rāmānujāchārya (left, in Hyderabad) and Basaveśhvara (right, in Basavakalyana)

those we saw earlier in this chapter, we should mention the Kandariya Mahādeva and the Lakṣhmaṇa temples, architectural marvels among dozens of temples constructed at Khajuraho by the Chandellas during these two centuries.

Several noteworthy thinkers appeared in these two centuries. Among them, **Rāmānujāchārya** of south India was a philosopher-saint who challenged the dominant philosophical school of his time, Ādi Śhankarāchārya's *advaita vedānta* (briefly described in the previous chapter). Rāmānuja developed the school of *viśhiṣhṭādvaita vedānt*a, which sees the world and individual souls as real, and emphasises bhakti and surrender to the divine as the path to liberation.

Basaveśhvara (also known as Basavaṇṇa, or Basava in short) was a royal minister at Kalyāṇī (modern Basavakalyana in Karnataka), who left his position to become a social and religious reformer. He founded the Lingāyat movement, which rejected caste distinctions and ritualism and, instead, taught personal devotion and dedicated work. Looking at the inner value of a person rather than his or her social rank, Basavaṇṇa promoted the equal spiritual potential of all men and women. His short poems in Kannada (known as *vachanas*) strikingly convey his spiritual and ethical vision as well as his firm devotion to his Lord.

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These two thinker-saints had a profound impact on the culture and society of south India in particular. Like other Bhakti saints elsewhere in the Subcontinent, they helped make spirituality more personal and accessible, breaking down some of the existing social barriers.

LET'S EXPLORE

In Kalyāṇī, Basavaṇṇa established an *anubhava maṇḍapa* (literally, 'pavilion of experience'), where men and women from every social, economic, religious or linguistic background, including saints and philosophers, could assemble to discuss all aspects of life, including moral values and religion.

- → Why, in your opinion, did Basava want people from all backgrounds to come together and exchange ideas?
- → If something like an *anubhava maṇḍapa* existed today, what important topics do you think people ought to discuss there?
- → What lessons can we draw from the *anubhava maṇḍapa* spirit to create a just and civil society today?

Taking Stock

Like every transitional period, this one saw both change and continuity.

The most visible change was the military campaigns by Turkic invaders and the start of foreign rule in parts of north India, which involved considerable plunder and destruction of temples, cities and centres of learning. This altered the power equations in a profound way. It also marked the spread of Islam as a new creed in India's religious landscape. At the same time, in the two centuries we focused on, large parts of northern India and all of south India remained outside the hold of the Turkic invaders. Neighbouring kingdoms often waged war against each other, though alliances were not uncommon; on a few occasions, native rulers even came together to form a coalition against a foreign invader.

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Fig. 4.23. The Angkor Wat temple in Cambodia

DON'T MISS OUT

The Angkor Wat temple in Cambodia (Fig. 4.23), constructed in the 12th century by the Khmer king Sūryavarman II, is the largest religious monument in the world. It was originally dedicated to Viṣhṇu, with inscriptions in Old Khmer and in Sanskrit, and enormous bas-reliefs depicting scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. The temple's five huge śhikharas or towers symbolise Mount Meru, the mountain at the centre of the cosmos in Hindu mythology. Architecturally, Angkor Wat shares many features with south Indian temples, though on a grander scale. Later in the 12th century, following a change of political power, the temple was gradually converted into a Buddhist one. This temple is one of numerous examples of how India's religious and aesthetic traditions profoundly influenced Southeast Asian cultures.

Despite disruptions in the north, internal and external trade continued and the merchant guilds survived and adapted.

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External trade was also a vehicle for the spread of Indian culture in Southeast Asia and China. Cultural traditions persisted in much of India, with new schools of thought and belief, and many literary and scientific compositions, not only in Sanskrit but also in regional languages.

The lesson of the period, if there is one, is therefore resilience in the face of conflict and the enduring power of knowledge, learning and creativity.

Before we move on ...

- The 11th and 12th centuries marked a turning point in Indian history (hence the chapter's title).
- In the 11th century, Mahmūd of Ghazni, after defeating the Hindu Shāhis, conducting many raids into north India, extracting much plunder, destroying temples and taking away prisoners. He however did not seek to establish his rule in India.
- In the 12th century, Muhammad Ghurī and his generals conquered Delhi and large parts of the Gangetic plains, all the way to Bengal, causing much destruction. Important centres of learning, in particular, were left in ruins.
- Still, large parts of northern India and all of south India remained outside the hold of the Turkic invaders. Powerful kingdoms often waged war against each other, though alliances were not uncommon.
- Internal and external trade, art and literature, and monumental architecture continued to thrive, and elements of Indian culture travelled abroad, especially to Southeast Asia and China.

Questions and activities

1. Why is the period under consideration in this chapter regarded as a major transition in Indian history? Give two examples each of change and continuity from this period.

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2. Observe Fig. 3.27 in the previous chapter and draw a similar 'star of dynasties' gathering all or most of the dynasties that appear in this chapter.
3. Taking a map of the Subcontinent, draw a geographical tour that covers all or most dynasties in this chapter (you may draw inspiration from some of the 'travels' the chapter's narration follows).
4. With the help of a map of India and Southeast Asia, can you calculate the approximate distance that Rājendra I's fleet of ships had to navigate to reach their objective?
5. Match these two pairs:

(a) Eastern Gangas	(i) Belur
(b) Chandellas	(ii) Bṛihadīśhvara temple
(c) Paramāras	(iii) Konark Sun temple
(d) Hoysalas	(iv) Kandāriyā Mahādeva temple
(e) Cholas	(v) Bhojeshwar temple

6. Working in groups, compare the dynasties in this chapter and in the preceding one; create a table to list the dynasties present in both, those that disappear from the preceding period, and those that appear in this chapter's period.
7. Using the chapter and any additional reading, prepare a short note explaining (1) why centres of learning like Nālandā were important; (2) how their destruction may have affected education and culture in India.
8. Why do you think Mahmūd of Ghazni carry out repeated raids from Afghanistan into India, while Muhammad Ghūrī sought territorial expansion into India and long-term control? Write a short note on how their motives shaped the outcomes of their campaigns.

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CHAPTER 5

India, a Home to Many

ayam nijah paro veti gaṇanā laghucetasām
udāracharitānām tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam
"This is mine, that is not mine," so think the narrow-minded.
For the noble-minded, the whole world is family.

— Hitopadeśha

Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own.

— Last message of Sri Sarada Devi
(spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa)

The Big Questions?

1. *What has made India a home for people from different parts of the world?*
2. *Why did oppressed or persecuted people from other countries seek refuge in India?*
3. *What is it about the nature of Indian society that enables people to assimilate here?*

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In the chapter "Unity in Diversity, or 'Many in the One' " (Grade 6 Social Science textbook), we read that "many Indians may be called migrants, in the sense of people not living near their birthplace or with their original community." In this chapter, we will explore another type of migrants — people who came to India from other parts of the world and settled here, adding another dimension to the diversity. There have been many such migrant communities in India's history, up to recent times. We cannot cover them all in this chapter and have selected only a few representative examples.

THINK ABOUT IT

→ Imagine this scenario — A stranger knocks at your door at midnight. It is raining heavily outside, and the stranger seeks shelter for the night claiming that his car broke down while he was driving in the vicinity. Your family goes into a huddle to discuss the pros and cons of letting a stranger into the house at night. Form two groups to discuss the arguments for and against in this scenario.

→ Now extend this scenario to a country like India — when refugees seek shelter in India, will similar arguments apply?

The Story of Indian Jews

Jews sought sanctuary in India in several waves. The persecution of **Jews** in various countries led to them having to flee their homes. India has proved to be a safe haven where they can practise their faith without fear.

The Bene Israel are a Jewish community that lived on the Konkan coast, just south of Mumbai. According to some scholars, they came around 175 BCE, from the ancient Kingdom of Israel. On their journey, their ship was caught in a storm and shipwrecked near the coast. The survivors

Jews: Jews are members of the people and the cultural community originating from the ancient Hebrews of Israel and traditionally linked to the religion of Judaism. A Jew may be identified either by descent from Jewish ancestry or through conversion. Jewish identity may therefore be defined on the basis of religion, culture, history, or ethnicity.

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settled in India and started a new life. Although they lost their holy books, they remembered their prayer, which says there is only one God. Over time, the Bene Israel grew to become the largest Jewish community in India, numbering over 25,000 shortly after India gained independence.

Several groups arrived much later, between the 12th and 19th centuries, again facing persecution in their respective countries. Some Jews settled near Cochin (present-day Kochi). The Raja of Kochi granted them land free of cost "as long as the world, sun, and moon endure." The Jews built a **synagogue**, which enabled them to practise their faith even as they became part of the Indian society.

Synagogue: A place of worship for Jews where religious services and special ceremonies like weddings are held.

Swami Vivekananda, in his speech delivered at the World Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893, had these memorable words:

Fig. 5.1. Swami Vivekananda

"I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the Earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation."

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LET'S EXPLORE

Look at the two pictures below. Is the place shown in both the photographs the same? Why is the Maharaja of Travancore (the name of the kingdom in and around Kochi at that time) giving such an expensive gift to the Jewish synagogue for the Torah (religious book of the Jews)?

Fig. 5.2. A plaque in the Kochi synagogue.

Fig. 5.3. The interior of the synagogue at Kochi.

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LET'S EXPLORE

Observe the picture Fig. 5.4. What clues do you get about the integration of the Jewish community into Indian society over time?

Fig. 5.4. A Jewish family in Mumbai, late 19th century.

The Syriac Christian Community

From the 4th centuries CE, some Christian groups who used the ancient Syriac language in their worship and traditions faced difficulties in West Asia. Under the Roman Empire, they were sometimes treated as **heretics** because some of their beliefs about Christ were different from those of the official Church. In the Persian Empire, they were suspected of secretly helping the Romans, who were enemies of Persia, and were persecuted as a result. To escape such **persecutions**, some Syriac Christians travelled eastward along trade routes and reached the Malabar coast of India (present-day Kerala), where they could live and worship freely. In India, Syriac Christians are also called 'Syrian Christians'; they are divided into several sects.

Heretic: A person considered to be holding beliefs (especially religious ones) contrary to those of the dominant view.

Persecution: Hostility, generally arising from religious, ethnic, social or political motives, often accompanied by harassment or violence.

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LET'S EXPLORE

Observe the pictures below. What are the clues you get about the integration of the Syriac Christian community into Indian society?

Fig. 5.5. A Syriac (Syrian) Christian wedding ceremony.

Zoroastrianism: Zoroastrianism, one of the world's oldest religions, was founded by the prophet Zarathushtra in Central Asia. It is based on the worship of one God, Ahurā Mazdā. Choosing good over evil is an important aspect of this faith.

The Legend of the Parsi Wise Man, Milk, and Sugar

The Parsis (followers of **Zoroastrianism**) came to India primarily to escape religious persecution in Persia (modern-day Iran) after the Islamic conquest of Persia in the 7th century CE. Zoroastrianism was the state religion of the mighty Sassanid Empire (3rd to 7th centuries). After the empire fell to Arab Muslim forces in the middle of the 7th century, Zoroastrians faced religious persecution in many forms — forced conversions to Islam, religious taxes (*jizya*), destruction of their sacred fire temples, as well as social and legal marginalisation. They were, therefore, forced to flee Persia. Unable to freely practise their faith, groups of Zoroastrians made the courageous choice to leave their homeland and sail across the Arabian Sea. Several groups of them reached India's western coast (in present-day Gujarat) between the 8th and 10th centuries.

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The Parsis carried little with them — their sacred fire and some hope to make a home in a place they had heard was safe, India. Raja Jadi Rāṇā was the king of Sanjān, in coastal Gujarat. According to a legend, the Parsis approached the Raja for a safe place to stay. Since they were unfamiliar with each other's languages, the Raja showed them a jug full of milk, indicating that the kingdom was full and could not accommodate more people. A wise man among the Parsis took a spoon of sugar and dissolved it into the milk without allowing the milk to spill over. Jadi Rāṇā was pleased and provided a secure place for them to settle in his kingdom.

Fig. 5.6. An 18th-century Parsi fire temple in Udvada (south Gujarat), close to the place where the Parsis first reached India.

THINK ABOUT IT

What do you think dissolving the sugar in the milk without spilling it meant?

The ancient sacred fire continues to burn in Udvada, a short distance from where the Parsis first arrived. They combined their ancient traditions with those of the local culture. Today India has the largest population of followers of Zoroastrianism in the world. The Parsis continue to live in India and enrich various aspects of its society.

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LET'S EXPLORE

This painting of a Parsi bride getting ready for her wedding shows many aspects of Indian culture. Do any of them seem familiar to you? Based on what you see, can you draw any conclusions about the integration of Parsi culture in India?

Fig. 5.7. Decking the Bride, a painting by Raja Ravi Varma

There are deep connections between the philosophy of Zoroastrianism and India's ancient Vedic schools of thought. For example, they share the same concept of a cosmic order holding the universe together. Their rituals also show similarities, since both give much importance to fire worship.

There are also interesting differences: in the Vedas, the *devas* are beneficial gods; in the *Avesta*, the Parsis' ancient sacred text, *daevas* are evil gods who drive towards chaos; the Avesta's chief god is Ahurā, but in India (after the Vedic period), *asuras* are seen as harmful powers or demons.

As you can see, there are also similarities between the two languages. Indeed, Old Avestan (the language of the *Avesta*) and Vedic Sanskrit share many word roots and also grammatical features. A few more examples (with the Vedic word on the left and the Avestan word on the right):

- *soma* (a divine drink) = *haoma*
- *hotar* (a priest) = haotar
- *yajña* (sacrifice) = *yasna*.

There is much more to show that there are deep spiritual and linguistic ties between ancient Iran and ancient India.

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The Arab Merchant Community

Arab merchants came to India from the 7th century onward, and many of them settled along the west coast in places like Kerala, Gujarat, and Karnataka. They traded spices and other goods, married local women, and formed new communities. In Kerala, they became part of the Mappila Muslim community, and helped build India's oldest mosque, the Cheraman Juma Masjid. These early Arab settlers in India came as peaceful traders, not as conquerors. They brought new ideas, culture, and religion, and played an important role in India's history of trade and cultural exchange.

Fig. 5.8. Cheraman Juma Mosque, Kerala

The African Connection

We have a different kind of story with the Siddis. The Siddis are of African origin; enslaved there, they were brought to India as slaves of Arab, Portuguese, and British traders between the 7th and 19th centuries. In the 18th century, some Siddis gained prominence in Muslim rulers' armies and briefly controlled

Fig. 5.9. Young Siddi girl from Karnataka

Fig. 5.10. Siddi woman from Karnataka

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parts of Bengal. Their cultural identity represents a fusion of African and Indian traditions. The Siddis have a distinctive dance accompanied by African-style drumming. Over time, they have adapted their language to regional influences and integrated African religious practices with adopted faiths of Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity. The Siddis are designated as a scheduled tribe. However, the Siddis' overall economic condition remains poor and efforts are being made to provide them with better access to education and livelihood options.

LET'S EXPLORE

What clues do you get about African and Indian cultural integration from the pictures here and above? Identify and name a few features that are distinctly Indian.

Fig. 5.11. Siddi dancers

Fig. 5.12. Hirabai Lobi

Hirabai Lobi was from the Siddi community that settled in Gujarat. She worked hard for the upliftment of the women of her community, connecting them with banking services, educating them on organic farming and other livelihood options. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 2023 for her selfless service to the community.

The Armenians in India

Fig. 5.13. Armenian Christmas at Armenian church, Kolkata.

Armenia is a relatively small, mountainous country located between Turkey and Azerbaijan, just north of Iran. Centuries ago, Armenian merchants traded in Indian spices and fine muslins. There is some historical evidence of them establishing a first settlement on the Malabar coast in the 8th century. During the time of the Mughals in the 16th century (you will meet them in Grade 8) many Armenians from Persia gained patronage from the emperors and began developing settlements in India.

The earliest such Armenian settlement was in Agra where the Mughal emperor, Akbar, gave them permission to build a church and follow their Christian religious practices. Armenians began to play important roles in the Mughal royal household, the army, as well as the administration during the time of several Mughal emperors. For example, Abdul Hai was Chief Justice in Akbar's court while Lady Juliana was a doctor in the royal palace.

The Armenians also settled in Surat, Kolkata, and Chennai, building schools, churches, and cemeteries, and creating a lasting cultural impact. Kolkata became a major Armenian hub. The 18th-century Armenian College and Mother Mary Church continue to be active. Their story reflects India's tradition of embracing diverse communities seeking refuge and prosperity.

The thriving trade routes of Madras (present-day Chennai), drew Armenian merchants who settled there around the mid-17th century. They became influential in commerce, especially dealing in silk, spices, and precious stones, and left a lasting mark on the

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city's economic and cultural history. Armenian Street in George Town memorialises their presence, while the St. Mary's Armenian Church, built in the mid-18th century, stands as a symbol of their faith. Though the once-flourishing Armenian population has dwindled over the centuries, a handful of families and heritage groups continue to preserve their architectural, mercantile, and spiritual legacy in Chennai.

The Baha'i Community in India

In the mid-1800s, a new religion called the Baha'i began in Persia (modern-day Iran), led by a man named Baha'u'llah. His teachings spoke of unity among all people and harmony between religions. The ruling religious leadership in Iran, however, branded them as heretics because of their different beliefs, and they were treated badly. Some Baha'is looked for safer places to live, and one of the first places they came to was India. Baha'is had started arriving in India during the late 19th century. Over the years, many Indians joined the faith. The Baha'is welcome people of all religions and backgrounds. Though Iranian Baha'is came to India to escape danger, most Baha'is here today are Indians who believe in the faith's message of unity and love.

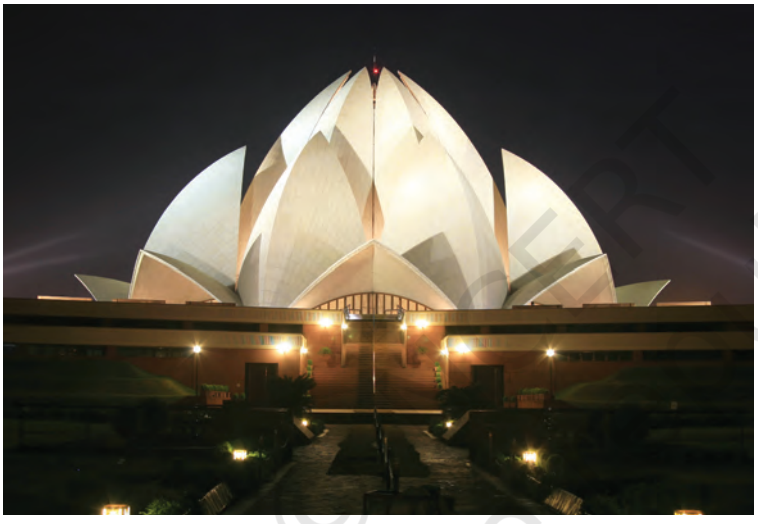

Fig. 5.14. The Baha'i Lotus Temple in New Delhi

The 'Good Maharaja' and the Polish Children

If you happen to visit the Good Maharaja Square in Warsaw, Poland, you may be surprised to see this monument (Fig. 5.15).

There is an inspiring story behind this. Poland was invaded during the Second World War, which took place between 1939

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and 1945. Thousands of families were torn apart, and many children were orphaned. Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji Jadeja, the Maharaja of Nawanagar State (present-day Jamnagar), was touched by this tragedy. He mobilised the Red Cross and other organisations to help him rescue the children and take them to Jamnagar, and provided them with a safe place to stay, food to eat and cared for them. He is credited with saving the lives of around a thousand Polish orphans between 1942 and 1946. Several thousand Polish refugees fleeing from other areas were also welcomed to stay in the safety of his state. The children and others returned home safely after the war ended.

Fig. 5.15. Memorial in Warsaw: A tribute to Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji in recognition of his help to Polish refugees during World War II.

In the early 21st century, his service to the people of Poland was recognised by the President of Poland and the monument was constructed in the Maharaja's honour. India was a home away from home, even if for a brief period, for the orphaned children.

Tibetan Refugees in India

Located on the other side of the Himalayan range, Tibet is India's northern neighbour. In the 7th century, the 'Land of Snows', as Tibet is sometimes called, became a centre of Buddhism when its king embraced the Buddha's teachings. Gradually, despite a few setbacks, Buddhism expanded in Tibet.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, Turko-Afghan military invasions in eastern India led to the destruction of Nālandā and other Buddhist centres of learning (see 'Turning Tides: 11th and 12th Centuries' in this textbook). Many monks left for Tibet, often taking precious manuscripts of Sanskrit texts with them. From the 15th century onward, the Dalai Lamas, each one said

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to be his predecessor's reincarnation, assumed a greater role, eventually becoming spiritual heads and (from the mid-17th century) Tibet's rulers.

DON'T MISS OUT

Tibetans, soon after taking refuge in India in 1959, started propagating their traditional system of medicine called Sowa Rigpa (also known as 'Art of Healing'); it was codified in the 8th century CE by a medical council held near Lhasa in Tibet, and blends ancient principles and practices of Ayurveda with inputs from China, Central Asia, Persia and even Greece.

Today, Tibetan medicine remains popular in Himalayan regions, including Nepal and Bhutan. In India, institutions like Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamshala (Himachal Pradesh) practise this system to treat chronic diseases and manage epidemics. It has also been integrated in the Government of India's AYUSH programme, which supports traditional and indigenous systems of medicine, including Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa, and Homoeopathy.

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Fig. 5.16. A Tibetan market in Goa

From 1950 onward, the People's Republic of China overran Tibet in several waves, eventually annexing it. In 1959, following a popular uprising in Lhasa (the religious and administrative capital of Tibet at the time) against the Chinese presence, the 14th Dalai Lama was advised to flee across the Himalaya and take refuge in India, where

Fig. 5.17. Tibetan monastery at Bylakuppe, Karnataka

the government granted him asylum. Since then, he has been an 'honoured guest' in India and lives in Dharamshala (Himachal Pradesh), from where the Central Tibetan Administration functions as a government-in-exile. The Dalai Lama is known for his 'Four Commitments', namely the promotion of human values like compassion, forgiveness, tolerance; the promotion of religious harmony; the preservation of Tibetan culture; and the revival of India's civilisational heritage, particularly Indian values like *karuṇā* (compassion) and ahimsa (nonviolence).

The Indian government rehabilitated the Tibetan refugees, provided education to their children, and facilitated the creation of Tibetan settlements to enable this community to make India a second home and preserve and promote its language, culture and heritage. The establishment in India, particularly in Karnataka, of many Tibetan monasteries patterned on the original ones in Tibet, created a space for Tibetan Buddhists to pursue their way of life and spiritual practices without fear or hindrance. Many non-government organisations have also supported the community by providing livelihood options. Over time, Tibetan refugees in India have become part of the society.

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"The Whole World is Family"

These are a few examples of people making India their home, either seeking refuge or seeing opportunities for prosperity and a good life. These stories give us a glimpse of the culture of acceptance and inclusion that is a part of the Indian ethos. The idea of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, "the whole world is family", is not just a slogan but has been a practice for millennia.

LET'S EXPLORE

Are there communities in your neighbourhood whose ancestors might have come to India centuries ago and made it their home? Have a class discussion on what their experience may have been.

How did India develop a reputation for being a compassionate country that welcomed people from different parts of the world and provided them with a place to call home? As we saw in earlier chapters in 'Tapestry of the Past', India had developed many schools of thought. Their core teachings included ideas like *sarve bhavantu sukhinah* or "may all creatures be happy", *atithi devo bhava* or "a guest is like God", and the value of compassion. The *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta* ('The Buddha's Words on Loving-Kindness') expresses the same sentiment beautifully in these words: "Even as a mother protects with her life her only child, so with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings; radiating kindness over the entire world…"

LET'S EXPLORE

Identify similar values in any story or local tradition etc. known to you. You could ask your guardians or relatives too. Collect these stories and create a class manuscript. You could include illustrations.

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Indian Values Beyond India

It is also striking to see how the Indian expatriate community has carried and practised similar values abroad. Wherever there is a sizeable community of Indians living today, it has been perceived as a peaceful, law-abiding, progressive and prosperous minority that contributes to the economy and integrates well in the society of the respective country.

While religious persecution has been experienced for centuries in many parts of the world, India developed a culture of peaceful coexistence and acceptance of various diverse faiths and schools of thought. This innate character of its people and culture has created a haven for the persecuted.

There are also many cases where people came intending to conquer India but were conquered instead by our diverse culture, rich philosophy and knowledge traditions, unique geography and climate, and thriving economy. We saw earlier ('The Age of Reorganisation' in Part 1 of this textbook) the cases of the Indo-Greeks and the Kuṣhāṇas, and there are more.

The idea of the fundamental unity of humankind is one of the core civilisational values of India, which can help the world resolve some of the crises we face today — wars, climate change, increasing inequality and discrimination.

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Before we move on ...

- India has been a haven for people persecuted in their respective homelands, or simply looking for a new land with new opportunities.
- India's cultural values such as *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, *atithi devo bhava,* or *sarve bhavantu sukhinah* are the basis for the sense of inclusion and acceptance that have enabled even small communities to find India a secure place and maintain here their traditions over centuries.
- These values have universal relevance at a time when there are multiple crises facing the world.

Questions and activities

1. On the outline of a world map, try to trace the routes that the communities mentioned in this chapter may have used to reach India. What types of physical geographies did they have to negotiate?

2. What are the key values intrinsic to Indian culture that enable it to welcome people of different backgrounds?

3. Homi Bhabha, Sam Maneckshaw, Ratan Tata, Fali Nariman, Nani Palkivala, and Cornelia Sorabji are a few names of Parsis who excelled in their respective fields. Find out more about people from other communities that made India their home and their contributions.

4. Take up a class project. Divide the class into groups. Each group takes up a small project to study a little more about the communities that we have been listed here. Share what you have gathered with your classmates through one of these ways — drama, posters, song, painting, etc.

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CHAPTER 6

The State, the Government, and You

The greatest punishment for being unwilling to rule is being ruled by someone worse than oneself.

– Socrates, Greek philosopher
(in 'The Republic' by Plato c. 380 BCE)

Fig. 6.1. The government and us

The Big Questions?

1. *What is the difference between a state and a government?*
2. *What is the difference between a democracy and a republic? What makes India a democratic republic?*
3. *How do citizens engage with the government in day-to-day life? How can one make government work for the people?*

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LET'S REMEMBER

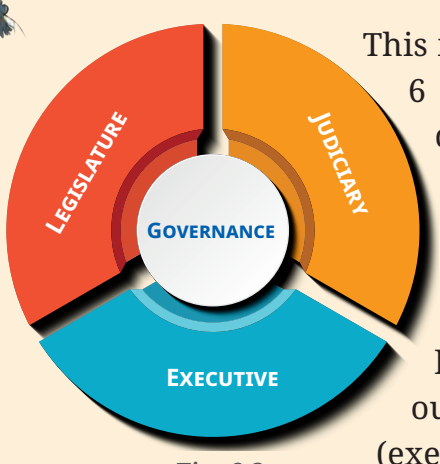

Fig. 6.2.

This is an illustration from your Grade 6 textbook. Do you recall that we discussed the need for a system of governance, commonly referred to as a government? There are three main functions that governments perform — making laws (legislature), carrying out laws and making policies (executive), and ensuring laws are followed (judiciary). We also looked briefly at the three levels of government in India and their functions.

In the chapter 'From the Rulers to the Ruled: Types of Government' in Part 1 of this textbook, we also came across some of the different forms of government in the world. We learned about democratic, monarchic, theocratic, dictatorial, and oligarchic forms of government, and how they function differently. Can you recount some of the differences?

In this chapter, we will look closely at the difference between a 'state' and a 'government', the difference between 'democracy' and 'republic', and how our government is structured.

What is a State?

A state (or a nation) is a political organisation that has the authority to govern a defined territory and its population.

A state has four important parts:

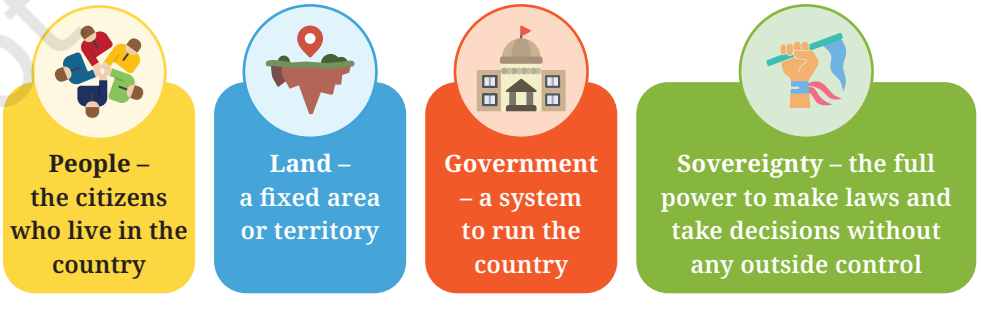

Fig. 6.3. The four important parts of the state.

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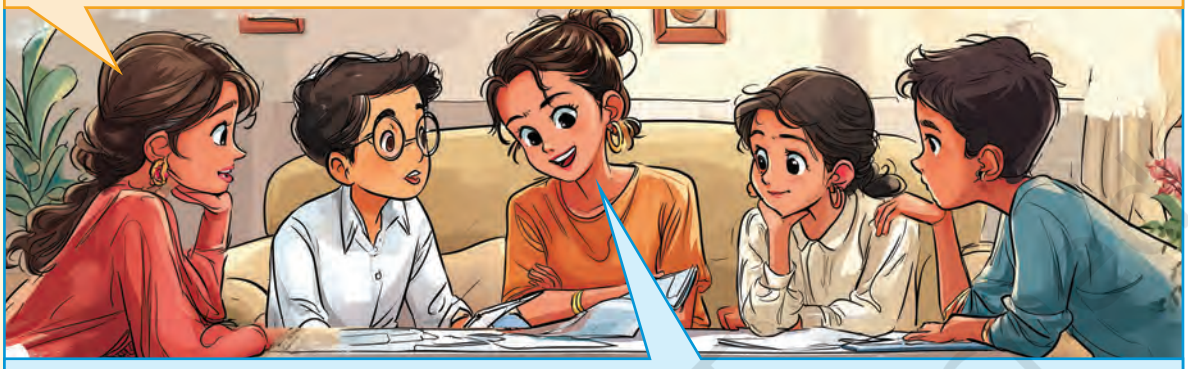
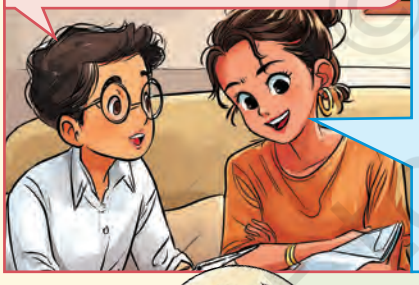
We often hear the words ‘state’ and ‘government’ used as if they mean the same thing. But they are not truly the same, even though they are closely related.

Roshini didi, today we had a class on the difference between a state and a government. I am a bit confused. Since you are studying Political Science in college, can you tell me why it is important to have a permanent population for a place to become a state? Can a state not be a place where people can just go, visit, and come back?



First, without people, meaning a population, there can be no state. Second, if people just go visit and then move on then they are like tourists, with no identification with the place nor anything that is common and shared — they don’t live together. But when people identify with a place or a territory, and usually live there, then they form a permanent population. Such a group of people — the permanent population — then develops its own culture and society, which also identifies with that geographically defined territory — the place where they live.

What exactly is a geographically defined territory?



It is a place, a geographical area, that has clear boundaries. The boundaries are not necessarily geographical features but sort of lines that are agreed upon by the neighbouring states that separate these states.

So, population and territory as a part of the state are clear. That also then explains why the government is a part of the state, but it is not the state. Because people live together, they need laws to be made and implemented for the state to function, which is what the government does.

What does sovereignty mean, and why is it essential for a state?

Sovereignty means that the state has complete control over its own matters and is able to make and implement laws in accordance with its own needs. No other state or external body can interfere in the internal affairs of that state. This is why sovereignty is an essential feature of a state.

Fig. 6.4.

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So, a state has four features — a defined territory, a permanent population, a government, and sovereignty.

DON'T MISS OUT

In India, the word 'state' can refer to the Indian State or to our subnational units like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu or Kerala (e.g., the State of Kerala). Except in such cases, we have used 'state' rather than 'State' in this chapter, following current usage.

What is a Government?

The government is a group of people or a system that runs the country. It includes leaders, ministers, and officials who,

- make laws,
- enforce laws,
- resolve disputes.

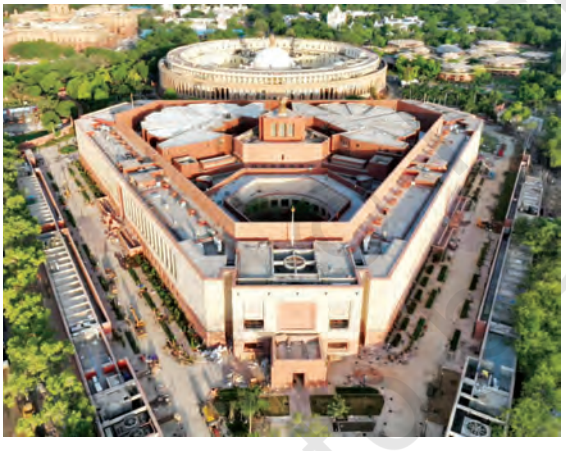

Fig. 6.5. Aerial view of the Parliament of India

The government is just one part of the state. It can change after elections, but the state remains the same. Think of the state as a school, and the government as the principal and teachers. Teachers may come and go, but the school remains.

Why are these two words used interchangeably?

In real life, we often say "the state did this" or "the government decided that" as if they mean the same thing. This is because the government acts on behalf of the state, and is the face of the state that we see in action every day.

So, while the words are different in meaning, people often mix them up because —

- the government runs the daily work of the state;
- we usually interact with the government, not the whole state.

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People, police, and the government

You might have seen police in your daily life and in the movies. Are they a part of the government? What do they do? Do citizens have any control over them?

The police in India are responsible for maintaining law and order within each state. They are part of the state government and work directly with local communities in towns, cities, and villages. They are agents of the state who can legally use force to ensure that people live in a safe and secure environment, free from crime and violence.

The police work closely with courts, prisons, and other parts of the criminal justice system. Beyond crime control, the police contribute to social change by promoting safety, justice, and a better quality of life. For example, awareness programs on road safety, drug abuse, and women's safety are part of their work. However, they must respect and protect the rights guaranteed under the Constitution.

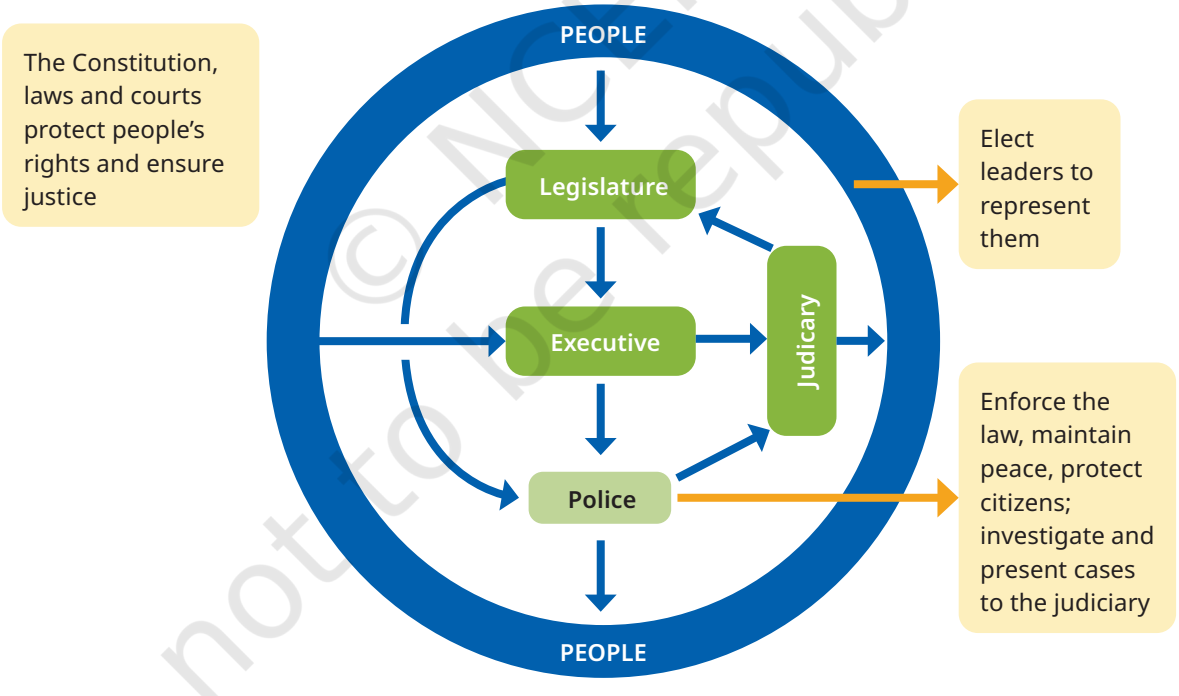

Fig. 6.6. A simplified diagram illustrating the various interactions between the people, police and different organs of government in India

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LET'S EXPLORE

Make lists of different government departments you are familiar with, or whose names you may have seen on boards around your home or on your way to school. What functions do you think they perform?

These departments form part of the executive function of the government. They implement the policies and laws made by the legislature. The judiciary, in turn, ensures that these laws are followed. Together, the legislature, executive, and judiciary form the three key pillars of government. However, in our daily lives, we primarily interact with the various departments that form part of the executive.

In an earlier chapter, we surveyed the different forms of governments that exist, or have existed, across the world, including democracies, monarchies, theocracies, dictatorships, and oligarchies. We saw how democracies give people the power to choose their leaders, and how this differs from governments where power stays within one family or group. In a democracy like India, the government is expected to work for everyone's wellbeing and protect our rights and freedoms.

In some countries, the legislature, executive and judiciary are separate, while in others they may overlap.

Democracy and Republic

Your textbook carries the Preamble to the Constitution. Notice how the Constitution makers used the words 'democratic' and 'republic' together. Why did they, when 'democracy' and 'republic' are often used interchangeably? Though political scientists discuss the distinction between these two concepts in detail, we will look at it in a simplified way.

British rule in India persisted for nearly two centuries. When India got Independence, she did not blindly adopt the British parliamentary system. Among the many discussions and debates that took place during the making of our Constitution, one was on the type of parliamentary democracy that India should have.

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People in both India and the UK elect their representatives, and the government is accountable to parliament. The British, however, have had a monarch (a king or a queen) as the head of state for centuries. On the other hand, the makers of our Constitution decided that India's head of state, the president, would be elected — not directly by the people, but by a group of elected representatives. (We will get into the details of this process in Grade 8.)

This brings us to the difference between a democracy and a republic.

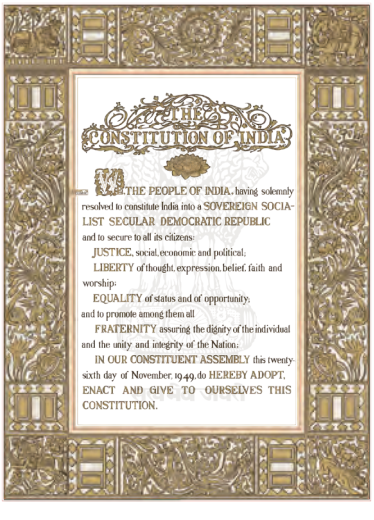
The core idea of a democracy is 'rule by the people' (*demos* = people, *kratos* = rule). In a democracy, people have the power to choose their government through free and fair elections.

In a republic, the head of state (the highest office) is elected and not hereditary. Very simply, a republic is a form of government where the head of state is elected (directly or indirectly) by the people, rather than being a king or queen who inherits power. Moreover, in a republic, there are limitations set on the power of rulers through a constitution or laws.

Note that a country can be both a democracy and a republic, e.g., India or the U.S.A. But not all democracies are republics; for example, the UK, Canada, and Sweden are democracies but not republics — they each have a monarch.

India, a Republic that Protects the Rights of All

India is a democratic republic, and its constitution guarantees fundamental rights to all its citizens. Constitutional provisions and the law ensure that rule by a representative majority does not violate the fundamental rights of any citizen.


THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

Fig. 6.7. Preamble to the Constitution

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There exist certain geographical areas that belong to tribal communities. These lands are protected by law for their use, and private companies and other individuals cannot buy or lease the land without the permission of the local community and due legal process. For example, mining was not allowed in the sacred hills of the Dongria Kondh tribe in Odisha, as the community strongly opposed the destruction of their revered land. In this case, the rights of the tribals to their sacred hills were protected by law.

Why is the protection of rights important?

Let us take an example. As per its rulebook, a Resident Welfare Association (RWA) had banned deliveries after 9 pm in its apartment complex. This rule was based on a majority vote; it ignored the view of a minority of residents, who argued that such a ban would affect the sick and the elderly. Was this a fair rule?

One night, an elderly resident collapsed because of low blood sugar, as the medicine she needed could not be delivered to her flat in time. The RWA modified its rule to exclude food and medicines from the ban, protecting the voice of the minority.

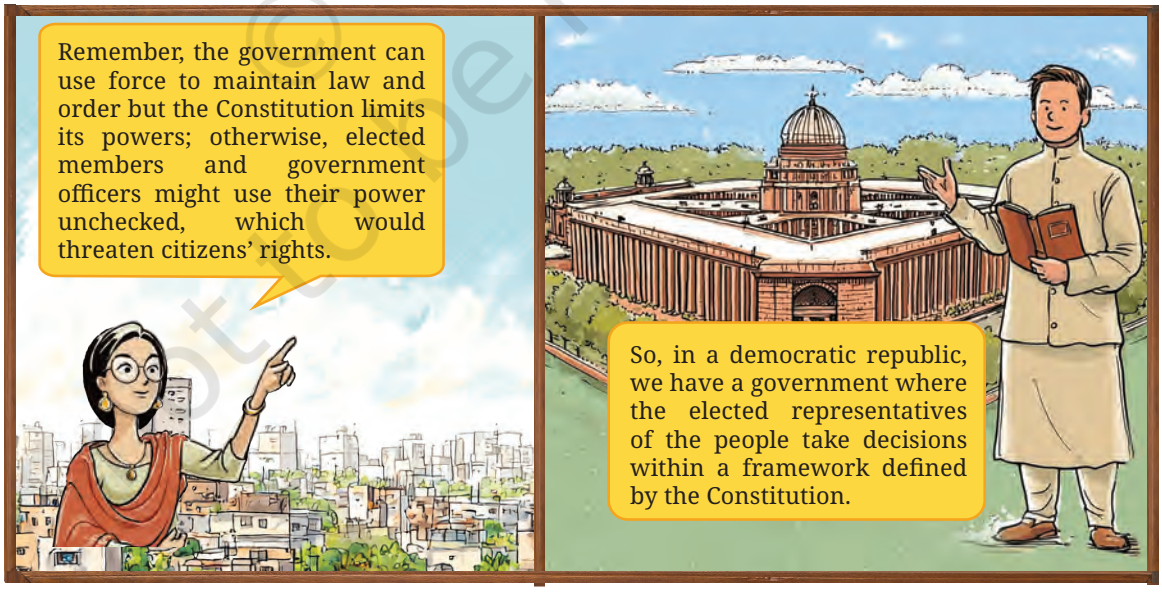

Fig. 6.8. How our democratic republic functions within the framework of the Constitution.

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That's a republic in action — where the rule of law is more powerful than the wishes of the majority. This is how republics like India, France, and the USA defend against the '**dominance of the majority**'. It stops the powerful majority from unfairly hurting the rights of smaller groups.

Dominance of the majority: A situation where the interests of the majority alone are pursued, to the detriment of the rights of minorities.

The Constitution ensures that no part of the government becomes too powerful. The elected leaders cannot pass laws that go against people's basic rights — like freedom of speech, religion, or equality before the law.

DON'T MISS OUT

In 1782, as the American War of Independence against Britain was ending, with General George Washington leading the American army, one of his officers wrote to him suggesting that he should become the king of America. Washington firmly refused, saying that such a plan would harm the country, and that he believed only in a government by the people under a constitution. Washington thus showed his deep commitment to a republican form of government, many years before he was chosen as the first President of the United States in 1789.

According to Kauṭilya, the author of *Arthashastra*, the king, the primary authority of the state, has to follow *Raja Dharma* and have a good governance system. He should ensure law and order. If there is no government, society will become chaotic with the big fish, i.e., the more powerful, eating the smaller fish.

Fig. 6.9. 'Matsya nyāya' — in the absence of law and order, the big fish swallow the smaller ones.

In India, the state operates through institutions such as the legislature, executive, and judiciary. The state claims the legitimate use of power, for example, through control by the police and taxation.

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Fig. 6.10. Vidhan Sabha building (the Legislature), Jharkhand

Legislature: The Lawmaking Body

The legislature is a branch of the government that makes laws for the country. In a democracy, the legislature represents the people and creates rules that apply to everyone. It ensures that governance happens through well-defined laws rather than personal wishes or arbitrary decisions. The states, too, have their own legislatures. They make laws only for the state.

Policy: A set of ideas or actions that an institution or government decides on.

Executive: The Law-Implementing and Policymaking Body

The executive organ is primarily responsible for **implementing or executing the laws** formulated by the legislature and taking **policy** decisions.

The executive: political and permanent

In every country, the government needs someone to enforce laws, design and implement policies, and manage the day-to-day activities of the government (administration). The executive does this important job. The executive is not just one person or one group; rather, it has two parts that work together — the political executive and the permanent executive. While the Constitution of India does not explicitly define the 'political executive' and the 'permanent executive', this distinction is an inherent part of India's parliamentary system, derived from constitutional principles and governance conventions.

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Political executive

The political executive consists of leaders who are elected by the people. These include the prime minister, chief ministers, and their ministers, as well as the president and governors (though the last two mostly have formal or symbolic roles).

These elected leaders are responsible for making big decisions, introducing new laws, setting goals for the country, and representing India in other countries. Since they are chosen in elections, they stay in power for a fixed time — usually five years — unless they are re-elected or dismissed by the president (we will explore this further in Grade 8). Their power depends on the trust and support of the people.

Permanent executive

The permanent executive includes government officers who are not elected but are selected through examinations like those conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). They are also called bureaucrats or civil servants.

Unlike politicians, these officers are not removed or replaced after every election. They work in the background to keep the government running smoothly, no matter which party is in power. Their job is to offer expert advice, implement policies, and manage public services.

Some key functions of the bureaucracy are —

- **Implementing laws, policies, and schemes:** Bureaucrats ensure that laws and government programs and schemes passed by the political executive are appropriately implemented across the country.

- **Creating a link between citizens and the government:** Through various departments and field offices, bureaucrats interact with the public, deliver services such as public schools, roads, and hospitals, and address grievances.

- **Record-keeping and governance:** They keep records of government work, decisions, and procedures.

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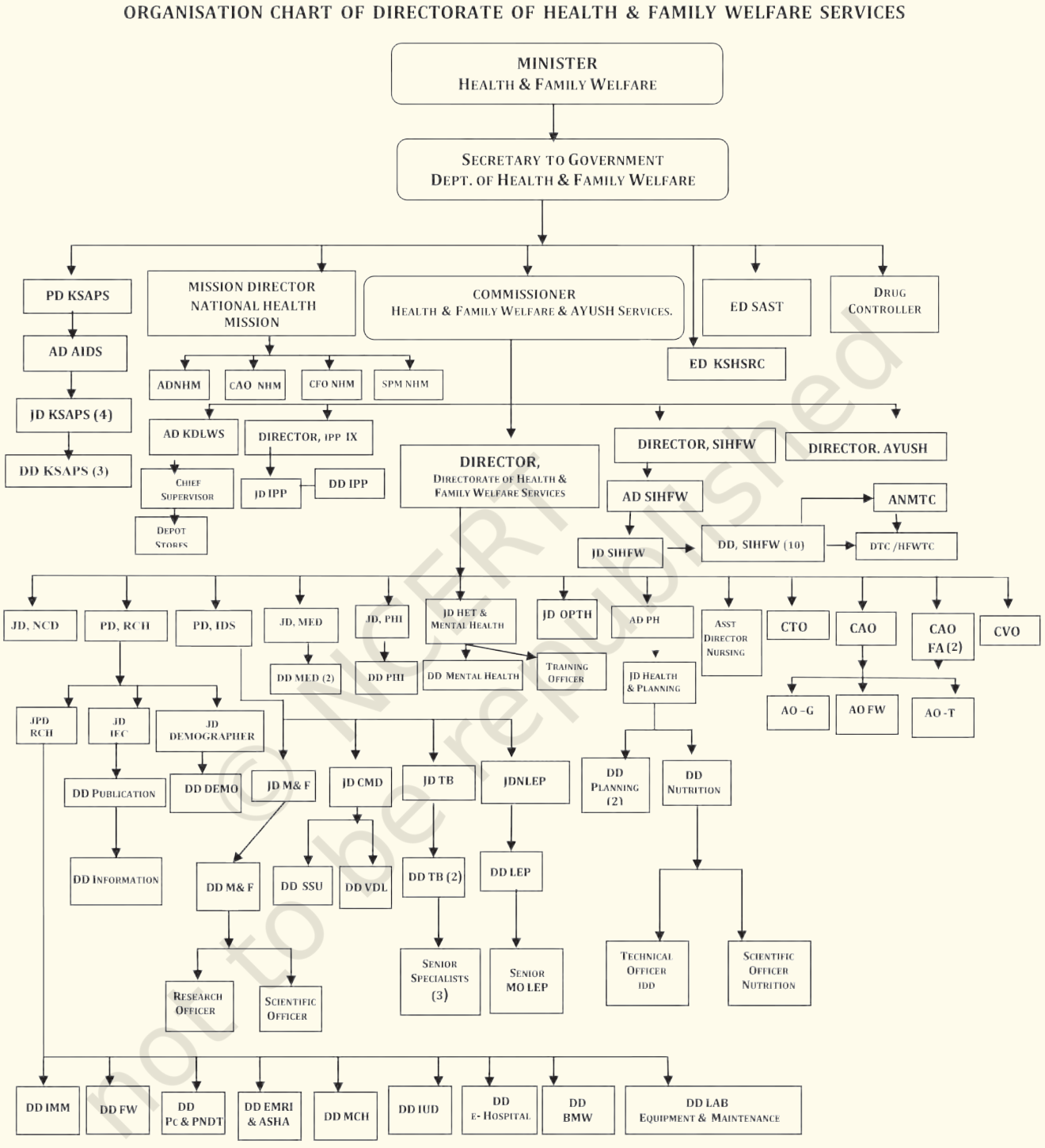

Fig. 6.11. The structure of the bureaucracy of just one department of a state. (You need not memorise this chart.)

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The bureaucracy is a hierarchical structure, as can be seen in this chart (Fig. 6.11). Such structures exist at the level of the district and block, too.

In India, the most well-known bureaucracies are the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the Indian Police Service (IPS), Indian Revenue Service (IRS) and the Indian Forest Service (IFoS). There are a large number of officers working in these systems (see Fig 6.11 for an example). Our interactions are usually with the bureaucrats serving at the grassroots — government school teachers, anganwadi workers, health workers, water and sanitation workers, or bus conductors. The bureaucracy manages large-scale programs like the census, national elections, disaster relief, and the rollout of welfare schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) or the COVID-19 vaccination drive.

Fig. 6.12. Chonira Belliappa Muthamma

Chonira Belliappa Muthamma (1924–2009), born in Karnataka, became the first woman to clear the examination for public services in 1948 and the first woman to join the Indian Foreign Service in 1949, although a strong gender bias prevailed. Women, for instance, "were made to sign an undertaking that they would resign if they got married," as C.B. Muthamma wrote later. Nevertheless, she managed to conduct a distinguished diplomatic career, eventually serving as India's first woman ambassador in several countries.

When she was unjustly denied promotion, Muthamma approached the Supreme Court; a bench led by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer struck down gender-biased provisions as violating the Constitution and made strong comments on the Ministry of External Affairs' record of discrimination against women. Muthamma's struggle thus remains a defining milestone in the pursuit of gender equality in Indian public service.

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C.B. Muthamma wrote on a number of public issues, from the decolonisation of the Indian mind to Indian democracy. In one of her essays, she pointed to the "unbounded freedom of thought and belief" characteristic of Indian religions as being "the single most important factor that makes democracy possible in this country".

We will delve into the structure and process of lawmaking in the chapter 'The Parliamentary System: Legislature and Executive' in Grade 8.

The Government and You

Fig. 6.13. Social welfare schemes run by the government

The Government of India plays the triple role of protector (law and defence), provider (public welfare and infrastructure), and regulator (of economic activity and social justice). As examples, the government maintains law and order to protect the people through police forces, provides education free for children by building schools and hiring teachers, constructs infrastructure like roads, bridges, railways, and airports, and takes initiatives to ensure food safety.

The above roles of the government are executed through India's Constitution, thousands of laws, many layers of elected representatives, a vast bureaucracy, and a judiciary (brief description in the next section), all of which help us greatly in our daily lives. However, you might wonder why, then, our country and her people also still face so many problems. Why do we still hear of cases of bribery and corruption in public office? We still encounter many issues that need to be addressed — people in difficult socio-economic conditions, lack of access to good education and healthcare, infrastructure that is of poor quality, inadequate access to government schemes, and so on.

How do you make or help the government do what it is meant to do? How do you ensure that your grievances with the government are addressed?

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Fig. 6.14. Online method to register your complaint or grievance

Here are a few things you can do!

1. **Grievance redressal:** Many government departments have grievance redressal offices where you can file your grievance. The government also has vigilance commissions to investigate matters of corruption. You can approach them if you find cases of corruption. Today there are mechanisms like the Public Grievances Portal (*https://pgportal.gov.in/*) where one can lodge complaints and grievances. The concerned government department will respond within a specified time period. Several states also have such portals.

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Transparency: Open access to information to citizens regarding government policies and actions, expenditure of public funds, etc.

Accountability: Those in power are responsible for their actions and decisions, and are obligated to answer for them to the public and other stakeholders.

2. **Ask the government for information about its policies and actions:** India has a powerful Act called the Right to Information Act (RTI), through which we can ask for information about government actions of public interest. For example, you could ask about how much money was spent on building roads in your neighbourhood, a list of beneficiaries of government schemes, such as a merit scholarship, the status of infrastructure projects like the metro line etc. Officials are bound to provide information under this Act, and the information brings **transparency** and **accountability**.

Bagepalli is a small town near Bengaluru. Several years ago, some government officials thought Bagepalli would be better off with double roads and streetlights. The work was carried out in a very unprofessional manner, making traffic movement difficult and causing numerous accidents. A local citizen filed an RTI to get information about finances allocated for the work. Armed with this information, a group of citizens confronted the concerned officials, who later ensured that the roadwork was completed to the satisfaction of all concerned.

3. **Use the media:** Write in print or electronic media about a particular issue on which the government can take action. Many government officials are active on social media. You can also use social media platforms like YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook or Instagram to share your concerns and tag the corresponding officials.

Fig. 6.15. The official X account to reach out to Indian Railways @RailwaySeva

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4. **Engage through a civil society organisation** (such as an NGO): India has thousands of citizen groups, collectively termed as civil society, which work on issues like education, health, environment, livelihood, women empowerment, etc. One can join any of those (or create one!) to push the government to address an issue you care deeply about.

DON'T MISS OUT

In 1970, the Kerala Government planned a massive hydroelectric project in the Silent Valley, which would have submerged vast tracts of untouched evergreen forests and destroyed their immense biodiversity, including much wildlife. Many non-government organisations mobilised public opinion against the construction of the dam, soon joined by hundreds of scientists, environmentalists, writers, public figures, teachers, and local villagers. Eventually, in 1983, the Central Government intervened and cancelled the project. Two years later, the Silent Valley was declared a National Park, ensuring its lasting protection.

Fig. 6.16. The Silent Valley National Park, created after the Silent Valley Movement's successful campaign.

5. **Write to political representatives:** You can write a letter to your local representatives, ministers, or parliamentarians, seeking action on a particular issue.

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6. **Vote in elections:** Once you are old enough to vote, make sure to participate and vote in local, state, and national elections, and thereby help to ensure that the leaders who care most about the issues you care about, and have the best plans for them, are elected to office.

LET'S EXPLORE

Collect editorials from a few newspapers. Read them in small groups. Identify the topics on which they have opinions. How many are about government policies?

Judiciary: the 'Watchdog'

The judiciary is the part of the government that makes sure everyone follows the law. It settles disputes, protects people's rights, and checks whether the laws made by the government are fair and just. In a democracy like India, the judiciary is independent—it is not controlled by the government or politicians. This helps keep justice fair and equal for all.

What does the judiciary do?

- **Protects and defends the laws:** It makes sure that the laws are followed properly.
- **Interprets the laws:** It explains what a law means when the wording is complex or when people disagree on its meaning.
- **Protects the rights and liberty of citizens:** It protects the rights and freedoms given by the Constitution. If fundamental rights are violated, we can go to court to address the violations.
- **Safeguards the Constitution through judicial review:** It acts as a referee when the government or others break the law.

Why is the judiciary important?

The judiciary protects the rule of law, that is, the idea that everyone must follow the law, even the government. It keeps

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a check on unfair actions, ensures laws don't harm people's rights, and resolves conflicts peacefully. Without a strong and fair judiciary, democracy cannot survive.

We will delve deeper into the judiciary in India in Grade 8.

Tiers of Government

LET'S REMEMBER

Do you remember this image from Grade 6, Chapter 10? It represents the three tiers of Government in India. Why do we have these levels of Government in India? Can't we have just one level to do fulfil all the functions? Let us explore this further.

India is a vast and diverse country with over 1.4 billion people, thousands of towns and villages, and many languages and cultures.

As a federal country, India has 28 states and 8 union territories, and a single central (union) government cannot meet the needs of all her people. Therefore, governance in such a large country must be decentralised at multiple levels.

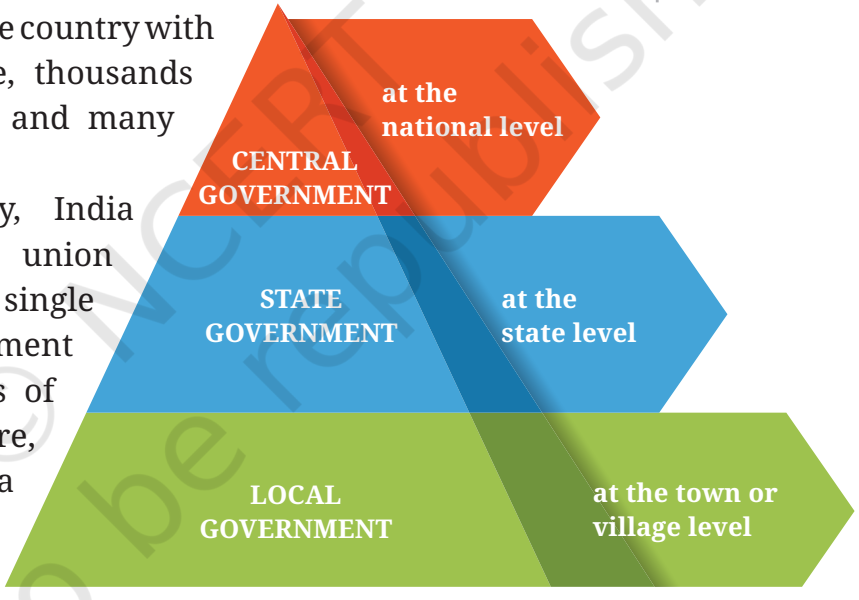

Fig. 6.17

Originally, the Constitution provided for only two levels of government, the Union Government (for the entire country) and the state governments (for each state). Local governments, such as panchayats and municipalities, were not separate constitutional levels at that time. They were listed under the State List, which means that state governments could decide how they worked.

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DON'T MISS OUT

One of the Directive Principles of State Policy listed in the Constitution was: "The state shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government."

In the early 1990s, the Constitution was amended to create the *panchayati raj* system and the system of municipalities for towns and cities. Together, these made local governments the 'third tier' of India's democracy, the other two being the union and state governments. This was done to strengthen democracy at the grassroots and enable people to participate directly in decision-making.

What is decentralisation?

'Decentralisation' means that power and decision-making are spread out and not concentrated in just one place or one small group. Local problems should be solved locally, and bigger issues can be solved by higher-level governments such as the state or the central government.

THINK ABOUT IT

If a streetlamp in your neighbourhood is broken, who would you contact to fix it? If a village road needs to be repaired, would the local people reach out to the Central Government?

LET'S EXPLORE

What might be the reasons that decisions regarding local concerns should be taken locally to the extent possible?

Generally, decisions regarding local matters are taken at the level closest to the people. Tasks that can be performed locally should be left in the hands of the local people and their representatives. The local municipal body can do it faster.

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But if the country's defence is at stake, that is the responsibility of the central government.

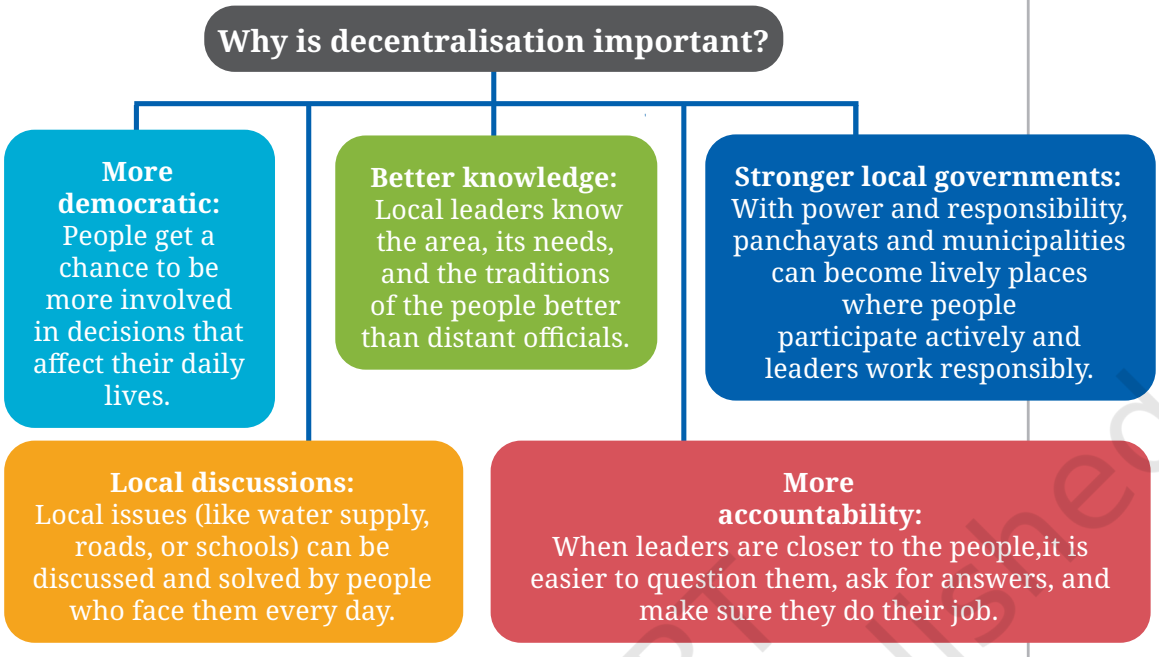

Fig. 6.18

DON'T MISS OUT

Mahatma Gandhi was a strong advocate of decentralisation and strongly believed in largely self-sufficient village governments called *grām swarāj*. He stated, "My idea of village *swarāj* is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity."

Central (Union) government: Looks after matters related to the whole country (like defence, foreign affairs, currency, and concurrent subjects like education and marriage).

State governments: Take care of the needs of people in each state (like police, land, health, agriculture, and education in the state).

Local governments: Work in villages, towns, and cities to solve local problems (like land, agriculture, water, drainage, streetlamps, parks, etc.).

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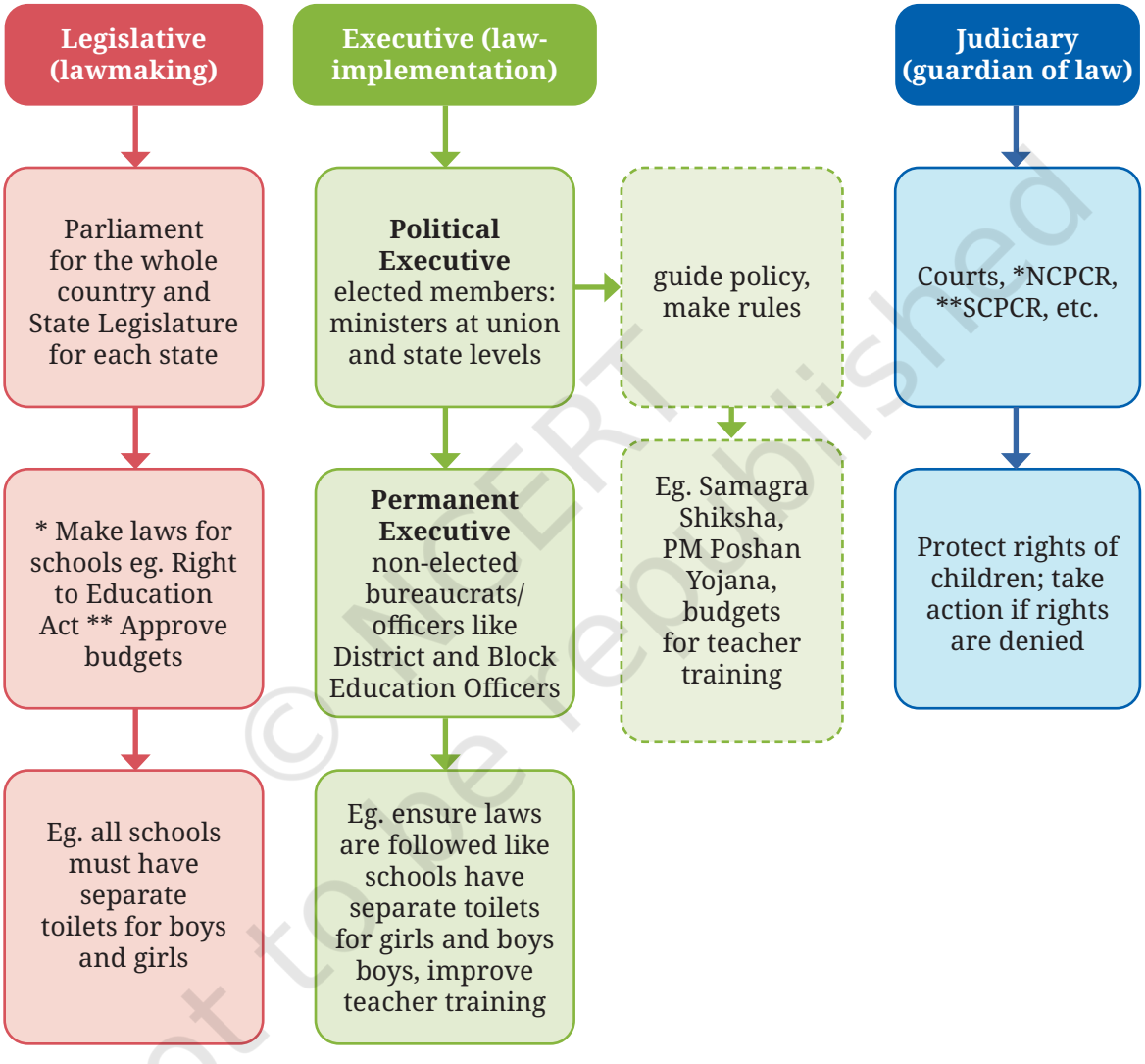
The working of the three levels of the school education system

In India, schools are not managed by a single person or office. Let us see how the different levels of government play different, yet interconnected, roles to ensure that every child gets their right to education.



** NCPCR = National Council for the Protection of Child Rights*

*** SCPCR = State Council for the Protection of Child Rights*

Fig. 6.19. A simplified diagram to illustrate the role of different parts of government in the education system

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LET'S EXPLORE

It has been more than 75 years since India became a republic. During this time, we have had many governments at the national, state and local levels. Many policies and programs have been designed and implemented. We have come a long way by increasing literacy of our people, improving roads, trains, and airports, and strengthening communication systems such as the telephone and the internet. But we still have a long way to go in addressing India's challenges.

Have a class discussion on the following:

- → List five major achievements of our country in improving the lives of ordinary people in your village, town or city. Which level of government made this possible and how?
- → List five problems that ordinary people face frequently. At which level of government should these be addressed and how?

Before we move on ...

- → The state and the government are different, but sometimes the terms are used interchangeably. The state is a larger concept that includes the citizens of a country, the territory of the country. It is sovereign, i.e., it has the independence to make its laws without any outside control. It has a government that makes and implements laws to run the country.
- → A republic is a form of government where the head of state is elected (directly or indirectly) by the people, rather than being a king or queen who inherits power. In a republic, the powers of the head of state are limited through a constitution or laws.
- → The three pillars or organs of the government are the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary.

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- In India, there are also three levels of government — union (central), state, and panchayat / municipalities.
- The Constitution of India forms the fundamental and basic framework for the structure of our government. It ensures that there are 'checks and balances' among the three organs of the government. It also ensures that the three levels of government work together for the people without excessive centralisation.
- The media plays an important role in democracy — it keeps the citizens informed and provides a platform for discussion and debate.
- Civil society organisations (NGOs) play a critical role in raising issues, and also working with government to solve them.
- The permanent executive consisting of civil servants or bureaucrats implement laws and policies devised by the government.

Questions and activities

1. "Every democracy is a republic." Is this statement true or false? Explain.
2. Give two reasons why decentralisation is important in India.
3. Imagine you are part of your school's student council. The council works like a mini-parliament — it has members elected by students, debates issues and makes decisions. In this context, do you think it would be better if only the council president makes all the decisions or if power is to be shared among all members?
   - Should the student council have the power to make rules about the food you eat, or the language you speak?
   - What can go wrong if the student council is the most powerful body in your school and no one questions its decisions?

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4. Think about these real-life situations in relation to India's democracy:
   - → Should the Parliament be the most powerful institution in the country? Why or why not?
   - → Should the Parliament have the power to make any law it wants, even if it affects your rights?
   - → What could go wrong if lawmaking has no limits? Can it lead to unfair or unjust laws?
   - → Who is more powerful in India, the Parliament or the Supreme Court? Give your reasons.
5. Ask your parents / guardians how they engaged with the government over the past year. Make a list and classify the items based on the level of government they had to work with. What challenges did they face?

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Noodles

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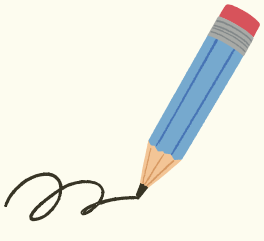
*'Noodles' is our abbreviation for 'Notes and Doodles'!



CHAPTER 7

Infrastructure: Engine of India's Development

A developed India will be one where urban and rural areas have the same infrastructure — roads, power, water, and communication.

— APJ Abdul Kalam

The Big Questions ?

1. *What is physical infrastructure, and how has it transformed over the years in India?*
2. *How has the expansion in infrastructure affected the quality of life for individuals and communities?*
3. *What is the role of infrastructure in the development and economic prosperity of the nation?*

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Fig. 7.1. State-of-the-art physical infrastructure

Introduction

Imagine you wake up one morning, ready for school. But when you step outside, there are no roads. The buses are gone. No one's mobile phone has any signal. The lights won't turn on, the internet is gone, and the tap is running dry! How would you reach school? How would groceries, and stationery reach your nearest market and your home? How would you access utilities like electricity and water? This is what life might look like without **physical infrastructure,** which is a vast network of tangible structures built to keep our cities and villages functioning. It includes transportation systems (roads, bridges, railways, etc.), utilities (electricity, water pipelines), communication networks (internet, telephone lines, telecom towers, etc.), energy infrastructure (windmills, solar parks, oil and gas pipelines, etc.) and so on.

World's highest railway bridge – Chenab Rail Bridge, Jammu & Kashmir

Delhi-Meerut Expressway

India's longest sea bridge – Atal Setu, Maharashtra

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Bhakra Nangal Dam, Himachal Pradesh

Vishakhapatnam port, Andhra Pradesh

Solar power project at Cochin International Airport, Kerala

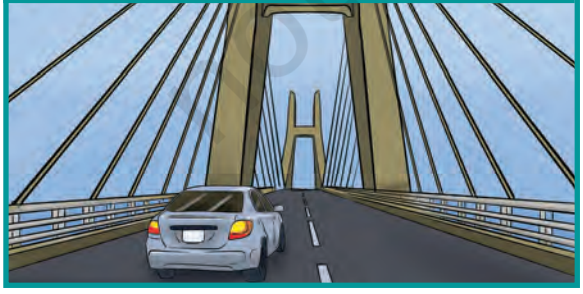
Muppandal Wind Farm, Tamil Nadu

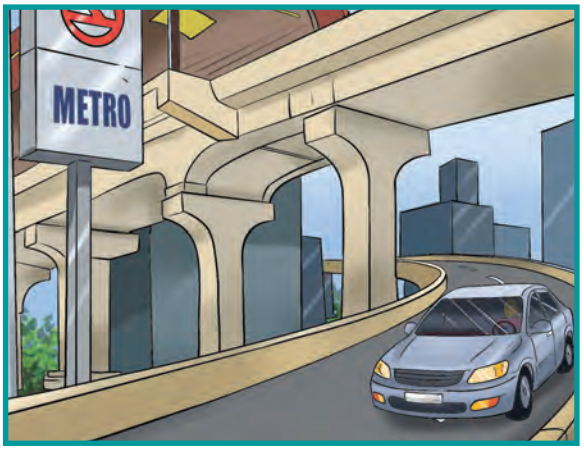
Fig. 7.2. Some forms of physical infrastructure

Why is physical infrastructure important?

One bright morning, Rishabh packed his bags for a two-day trip from Delhi to his hometown, Talegaon in Nashik, Maharashtra.

He started off in his car, zoomed across a wide bridge and then parked the car at the metro station.





He hopped onto the metro to skip the heavy traffic and quickly reached the railway station.

Soon he was on a train, rushing past green fields and towns. He called his mother and shared his location using his smartphone.

After reaching closer to home, he rode a bus that moved through many flyovers.

He was seated right next to Satish, a hardworking tomato farmer from Maharashtra, who was returning from the mandi after selling his harvest. Rishabh saw some of the tomatoes in his bag kept right next to him. He remarked "Ahh! Such red and juicy tomatoes". Satish told him that his juicy red tomatoes were not just a gift of sunshine and rain.

It was possible because canals and electric water pumps helped irrigation, good roads helped trucks carry his tomatoes to the city, cold storage kept them fresh, and the internet helped him know about the best inputs and market prices. They both wondered how important is the physical infrastructure which is connected like pieces of a puzzle, helping safe and timely travel of people and goods.

Finally, Rishabh got off at the bus stand, boarded an autorickshaw that dropped him at his door.

Fig. 7.3. Rishabh's journey

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Physical infrastructure is the backbone of our nation — it makes life easier for people, communities, businesses, and enables government to function smoothly. For instance, transport systems like roads, railways, airways, and shipping connect places of origin or manufacturing of goods and services to the nearest markets. India has had a network of trade routes since ancient times, and today's modern infrastructure has taken this forward to boost trade, both within and outside the country. Better infrastructure also supports tourism, connects remote areas, and helps during emergencies like floods or earthquakes. It also strengthens national security by improving access to all kinds of terrain for the defence forces.

THINK ABOUT IT

- What might happen to Satish's efforts if any part of the infrastructure is missing?
- What happens when a new highway is built near a village? How does it impact the lives of the people living nearby?
- Imagine if there were no internet or phone services. How would this affect people's ability to work or learn?

Transportation Infrastructure

How do you and your family members commute to nearby and far-off places? Let's learn about the transportation infrastructure that enables the mobility of people and goods.

a) Road and highway network

Did you know? India has the second-largest road network in the world, only after the United States of America (2024). There are many types of roads. The local roads near your home help children reach school, farmers carry crops to markets, and ambulances reach hospitals. Then there are the bigger roads like state highways connecting towns and districts within a state along with other bigger highways. These are built and maintained by states through their public works departments. Then, national highways and

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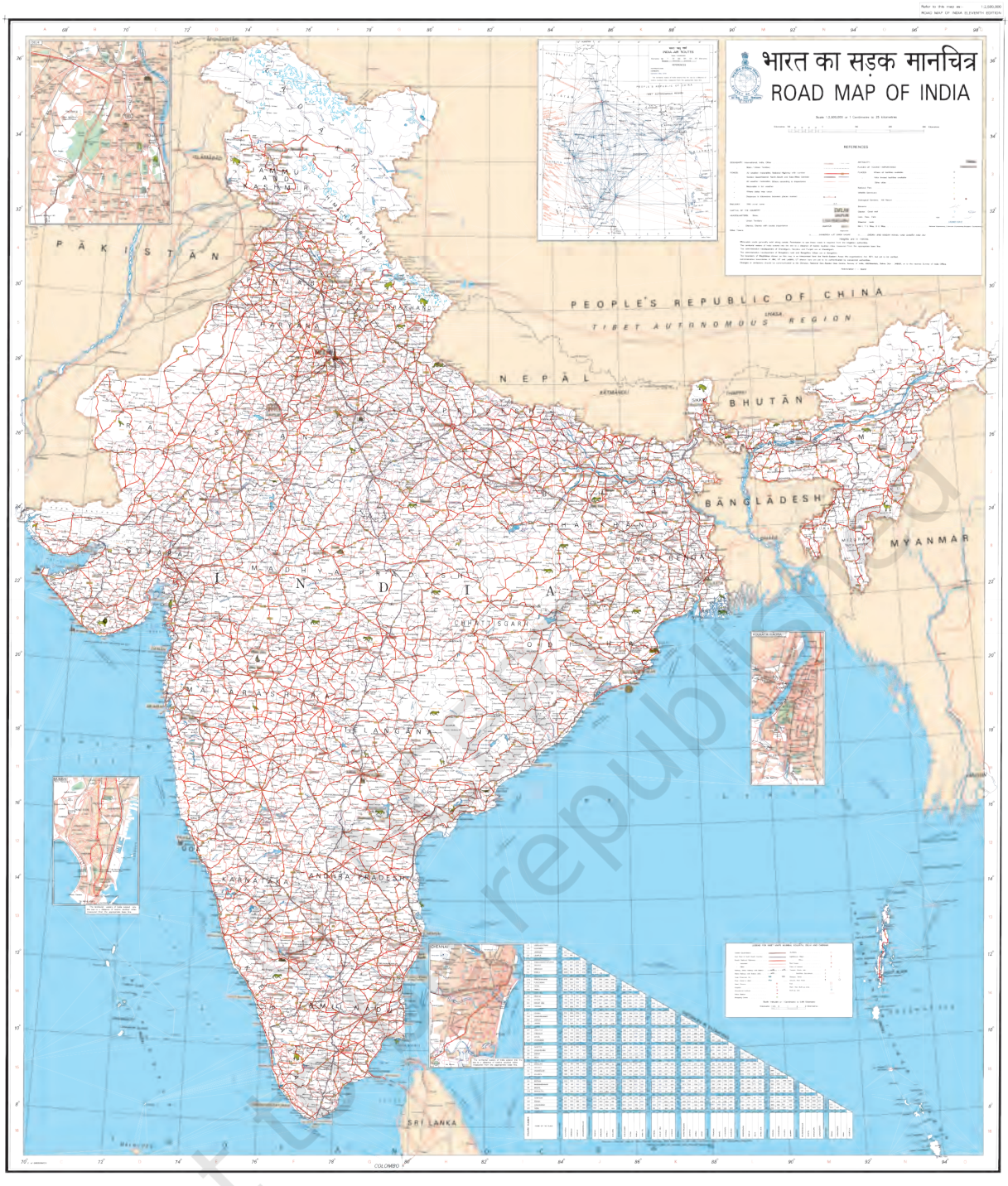

Fig. 7.4. Dense network of roadways in India

expressways are like super fast roads that join cities across states, and are built and maintained by the central government. They connect with other infrastructure like railway stations, airports, and ports so that goods and people can travel smoothly.

Fig. 7.5. Dhola Sadiya Bridge, Assam

Fig. 7.6. Living root bridge (called jingkieng jri in Khasi), Meghalaya

DON'T MISS OUT

As of 2025, the length of India's national highways was around 150,000 km (Fig. 7.4) NH44 is the longest national highway in India at 4,112 km. It runs from Srinagar in the north to Kanyakumari in the south. In addition, the Golden Quadrilateral is an important highway network connecting four of India's major cities — Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata.

Highways cannot be built everywhere especially in difficult terrains like dense forests, wide river beds, and steep mountains. In such cases, bridges and tunnels enable ease of access. For instance, the Dhola Sadiya Bridge (or the Bhupen Hazarika Setu) connects Assam and Arunachal Pradesh across the Lohit River, a tributary of the Brahmaputra. At 9.15 km, it is the second longest bridge in India. Before it was built, people had to rely on ferries for travel, which did not work during floods. Now, the bridge provides year-round travel and has cut travel time by four hours. Farmers can take their vegetables and fruits to the market before they spoil, and people can access hospitals or medicines faster, even during floods.

Another infrastructure marvel closer to nature is the Meghalaya's living root bridges which are crafted by the indigeneous Khāsi and Jaintia tribes using the roots of the *Ficus*

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elastica tree or the Indian rubber tree. They guide the roots across streams with bamboo and palm trunks, and over many years the roots grow stronger, twisting into natural bridges. Some take decades or even centuries to mature and can last for hundreds of years, standing 15–30 m high. These bridges are not just pathways but living and growing structures which have been nurtured over generations. They are a reflection of the knowledge that the local people have about Nature; these bridges have a cultural meaning too, connecting one generation to another.

b) Indian railway network

The British introduced railways in India in 1853 to transport raw materials like cotton and tea to ports for exporting them to Britain. Railways also helped British goods move across India

Fig. 7.7. Indian railway network during colonial rule 1882

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and created a market for them. In addition, the system allowed the exploitation of resources and quicker movement of troops, which helped the British ensure tighter control over the vast Indian territory.

As the railway network expanded, trade grew, major markets developed, and new settlements emerged near stations. Railways became the lifeline for moving people and goods. Today, the Indian railways carry over 20 million passengers everyday, and is one of the cheapest train services in the world. Cargo trains carry items like coal, grains, textiles, and electronics, using 75–90 per cent less energy than road transport. Earlier, trains used coal and diesel, which caused a lot of pollution. Now, India is aiming to have 100 per cent trains running on electricity by 2025, which is better for the environment, and a huge achievement for the country, see Fig. 7.8.

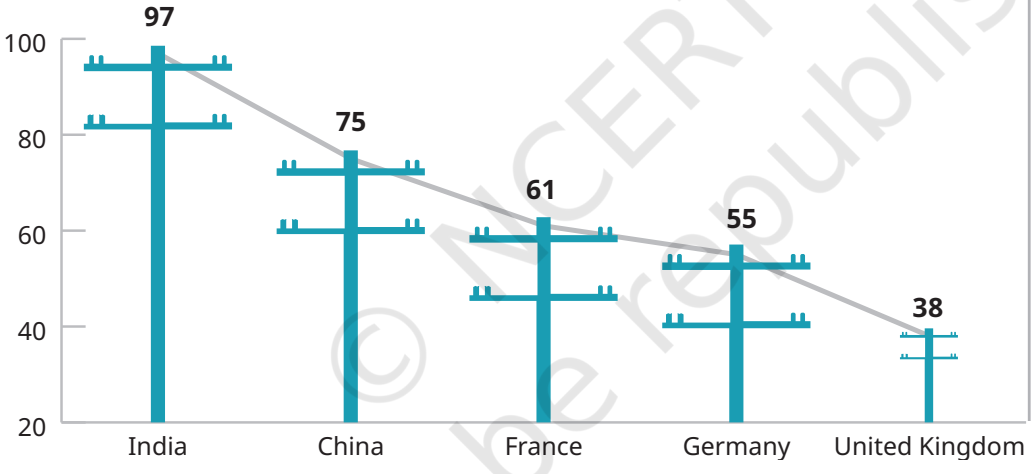

Fig. 7.8. Percentage of electrified railway networks — country comparisons, 2024

Indian Railways is also the largest employer with about 1.21 million employees in 2024, including engineers, ticket collectors, and service staff. Additionally, it also creates many indirect jobs like catering, vending, and taxi services.

Fig. 7.9. Food vending at a railway station

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From 1853 to now, Indian railways have come a long way!

Today, Indian Railways is the fourth-largest railway system in the world.

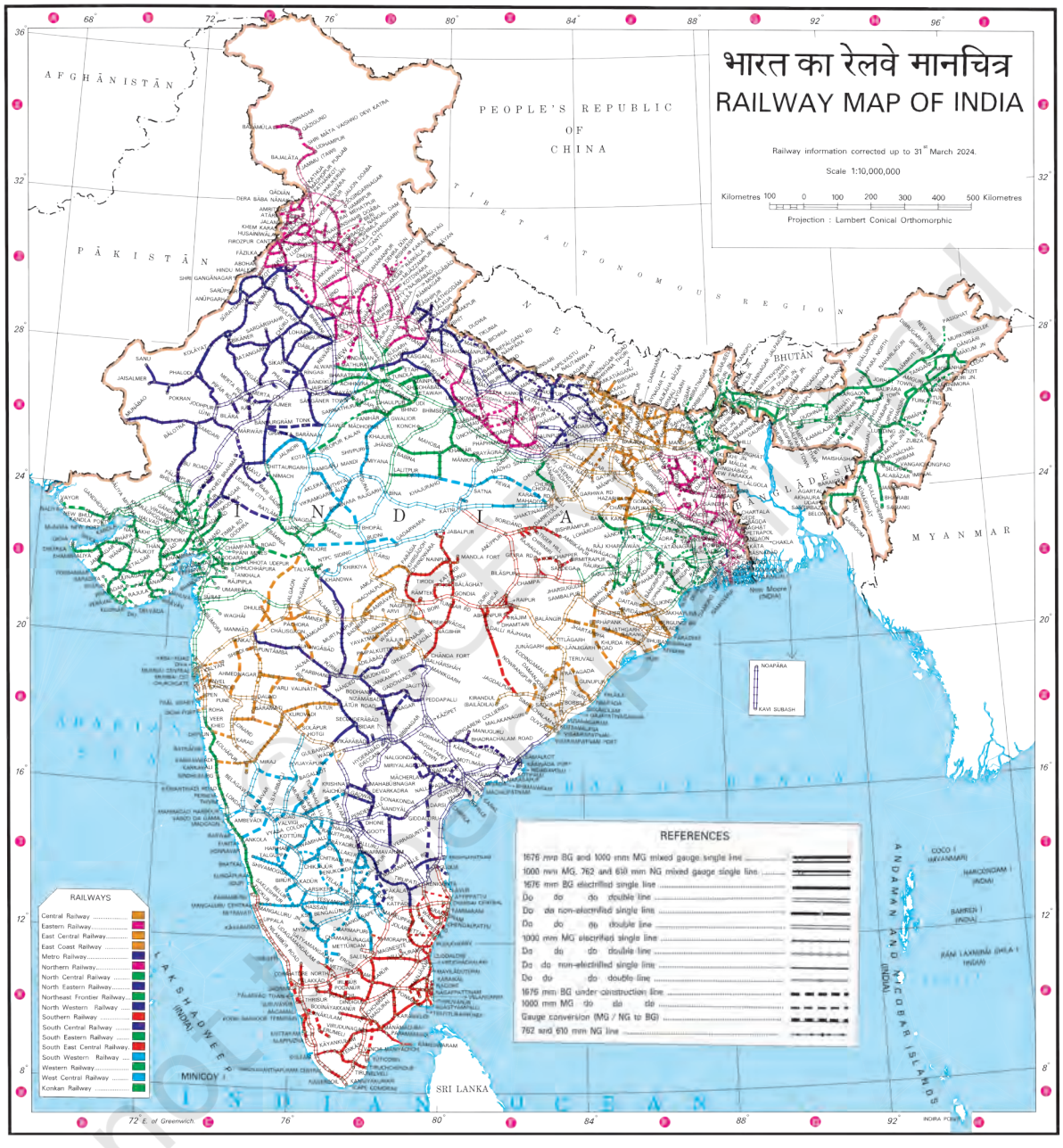

Fig. 7.10. Indian Railway Network, 2024

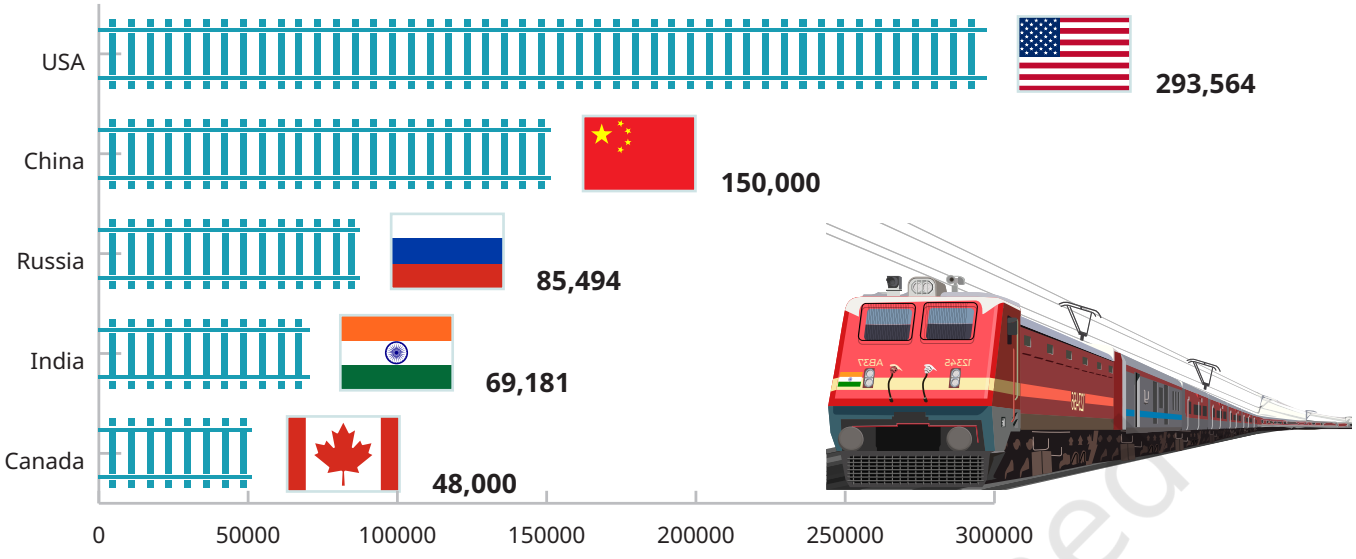

Fig. 7.11. Country-wise comparison — length of railway tracks (km) in 2024

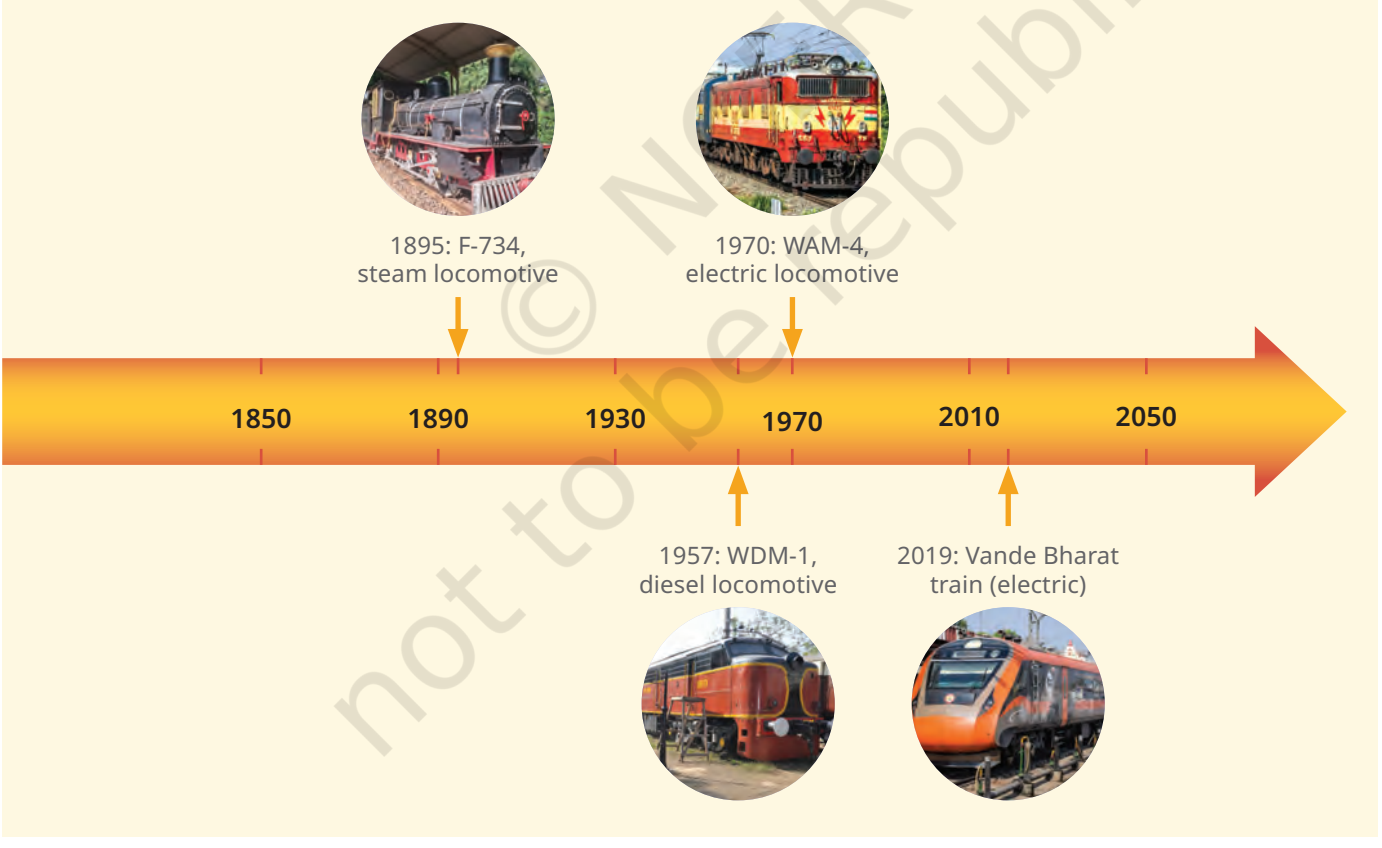

Fig. 7.12. Timeline of development of trains in India

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Fig. 7.13. A metro train plying its route

Fig. 7.14. Commuters inside a metro train

c) Metro train systems

Metro trains operate in 23 Indian cities, with a total length of over 1,000 km. The network is expanding and soon India will have the third-largest network in the world, after China and the USA. They offer fast and reliable travel, easier daily commutes and help reduce road traffic. By running on underground and elevated tracks metro trains cut travel time, and also lower pollution by using cleaner fuels like electricity; some even use solar power, like the Delhi Metro.

LET'S EXPLORE

Have you or your family members ever taken a train or a metro? What sort of economic activities did you see around the stations? Share the experience with your classmates.

d) Air transport

Air transport is the fastest way to connect people and places within and across countries. Passenger flights carry people and cargo flights move high-value or perishable goods like vaccines, chemicals, seafood, etc. These are particularly helpful in delivering aid to people during disasters like floods or earthquakes as they can reach difficult terrains like high mountains, deserts, dense forests, and long oceanic stretches easily.

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Fig. 7.15. Machinery for loading cargo into the airplane

Fig. 7.16. Passengers inside an airplane

DON'T MISS OUT

- → India has the third-highest domestic air traffic in the world, after the USA and China, and handled around 376 million passengers in 2024–25!
- → Look at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru, Karnataka which is designed based on the concept of 'garden city'. It is adorned with bamboo structures, plants and vibrant green spaces while also adopting the latest infrastructure to serve passengers.

Fig. 7.17. Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru

In 2025, India has 159 airports. Look at some of the international and domestic airports in the map Fig. 7.18. Which airport is closest to your home?

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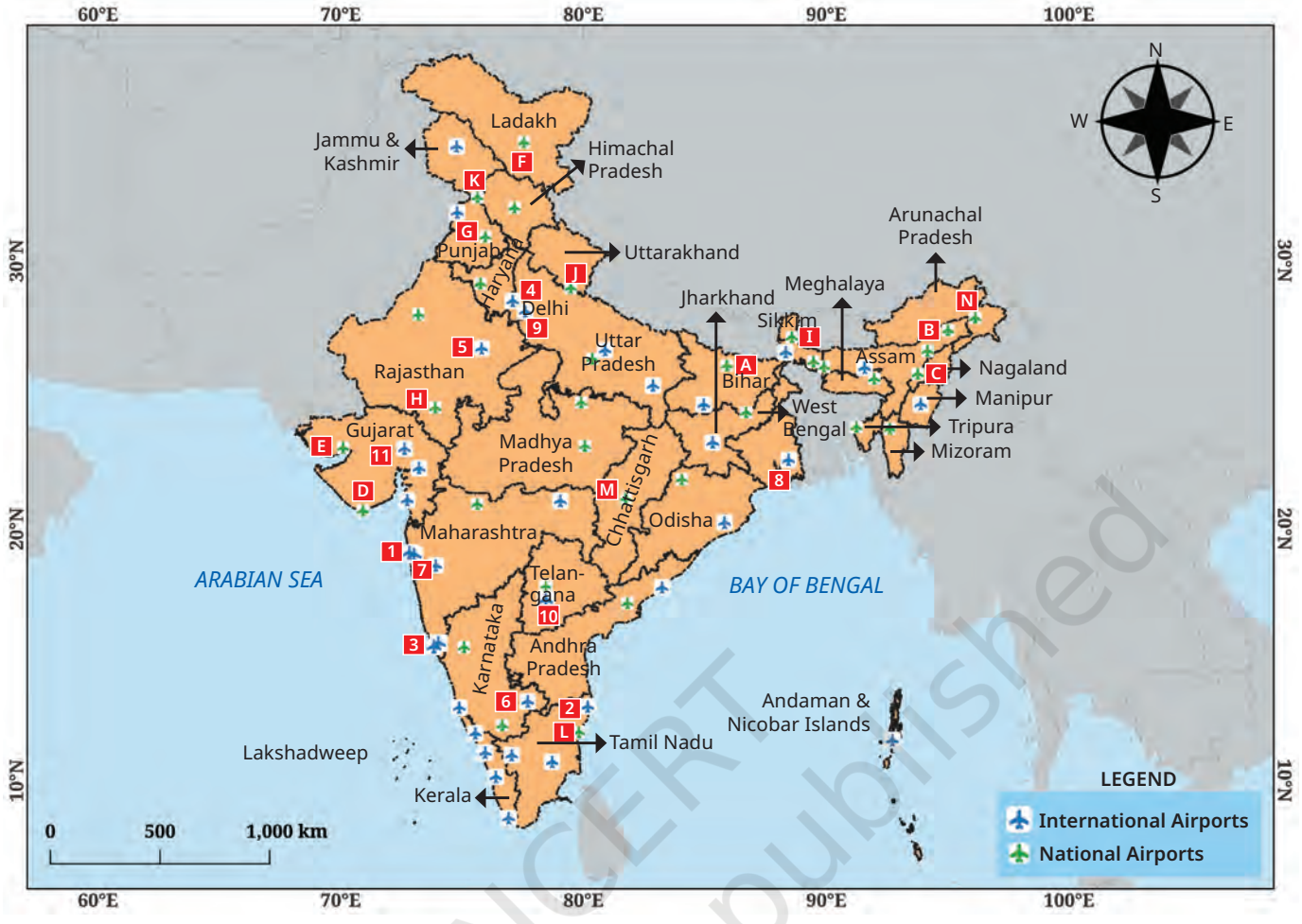

LIST OF SOME NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS (numbered in ■ on the map)

1. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, Mumbai, Maharashtra
2. Chennai International Airport, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
3. Dabolim Airport (Goa International Airport), Goa
4. Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi
5. Jaipur International Airport, Jaipur, Rajasthan
6. Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, Karnataka
7. Navi Mumbai International Airport, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra
8. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport, Kolkata, West Bengal
9. Noida International Airport, Jewar, Uttar Pradesh
10. Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad, Telangana
11. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

A. Darbhanga Airport, Darbhanga, Bihar
B. Dibrugarh Airport, Dibrugarh, Assam
C. Dimapur Airport, Dimapur, Nagaland
D. Diu Airport, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu
E. Kandla Airport, Anjar, Gujarat
F. Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport, Leh
G. Ludhiana Airport, Ludhiana, Punjab
H. Maharana Pratap Airport, Udaipur, Rajasthan
I. Pakyong Airport, Pakyong, Sikkim
J. Pantnagar Airport, Pantnagar, Uttarakhand
K. Pathankot Airport, Pathankot, Punjab
L. Puducherry Airport, Puducherry
M. Swami Vivekananda Airport, Raipur, Chhattisgarh
N. Tezu Airport, Tezu, Arunachal Pradesh

Fig. 7.18. Some major airports of India

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Fig. 7.19. Cargo Ship

Fig. 7.20. Vishakhapatnam Port, Andhra Pradesh

e) Shipping and ports

India's approximately 11,100 km of coastline is connected to regions like West Asia, Africa, and Europe, supporting trade through shipping. As a cheaper mode of transport, ships carry heavy goods like coal, cars, and cement over long distances. Ships dock at ports where goods are loaded and unloaded. India has 12 major ports and 217 minor ports. The volume of cargo handled has increased by 50 per cent in the past decade.

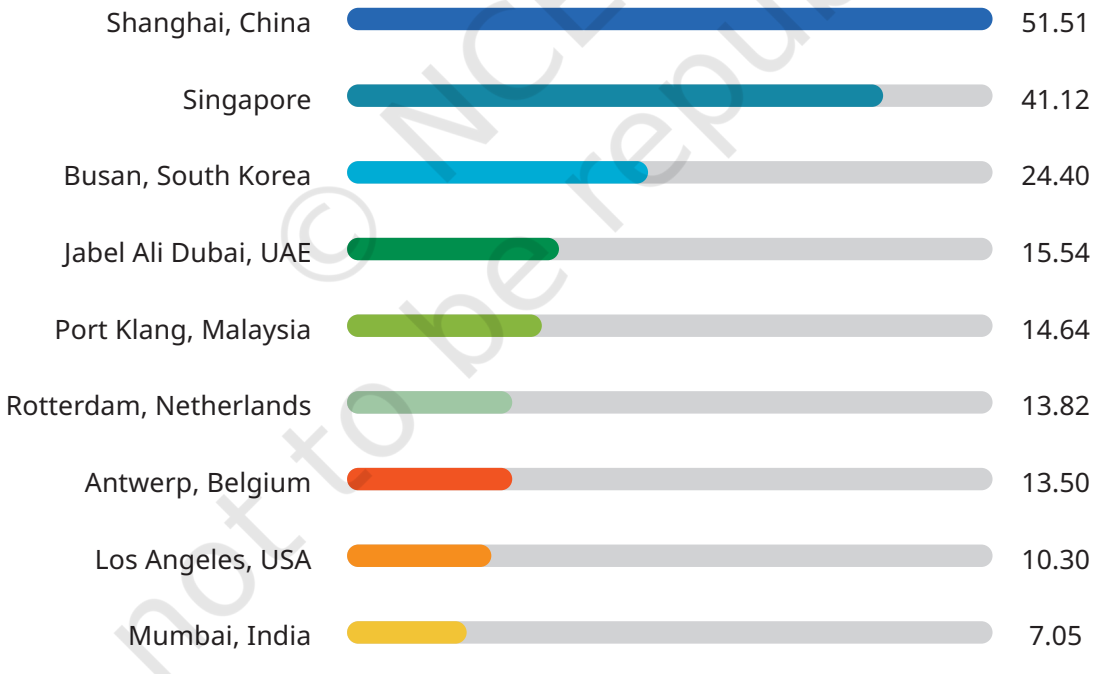

*Fig. 7.21. Major container ports in the world by volume of trade (TEU) in 2024**

TEU stands for Twenty-foot Equivalent Units and measures the capacity of container ships and port activity. Generally, 1 TEU =33 cubic metres.

**These numbers need not be memorised by the students.*

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Fig. 7.22. Major sea ports of India

Communications Infrastructure

Technology has transformed how we communicate, making it faster and easier through devices like phones, computers, and tablets. Behind this is a communication infrastructure, including cables, wireless devices, towers, satellites, and data centres, that enables transmitting messages, images, and videos. Let us see how communication evolved from slow, manual methods to digital systems with instant global connectivity.

When Rani, from a village in Madhya Pradesh, sends a voice note to her cousin in Tamil Nadu, it feels so simple — just tap, record, send. But have you ever wondered what magical journey that tiny message takes? It's not just the two phones. First, electricity powers the mobile tower near her village. Then, the message zips through fibre cables buried under fields and roads, gets

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transmitted to satellites in space, and travels through giant servers buzzing in distant cities — before finally popping up on her cousin's phone. A whole invisible world is working together just so one little *Namaste* can reach across India.

THINK ABOUT IT

Which parts of this process do you think are easiest to see in real life, and which are completely invisible?

Through the advancements in communication, students can access online classes, digital libraries, and educational videos, even in remote areas. It aids emergency response during natural disasters through quick mobile SMS alerts or apps. Small and large businesses sell products across the world through **e-commerce**. From quick online payments to **e-governance** where citizens can apply for documents, file complaints, or get information easily, progress in communication infrastructure has promoted ease of living for communities.

E-governance: Use of communication technologies by government to deliver services to citizens. For example, the DigiLocker app to store documents like Aadhaar card and driving license online.

E-commerce: Buying or selling products and services which are conducted on online platforms or over the internet.

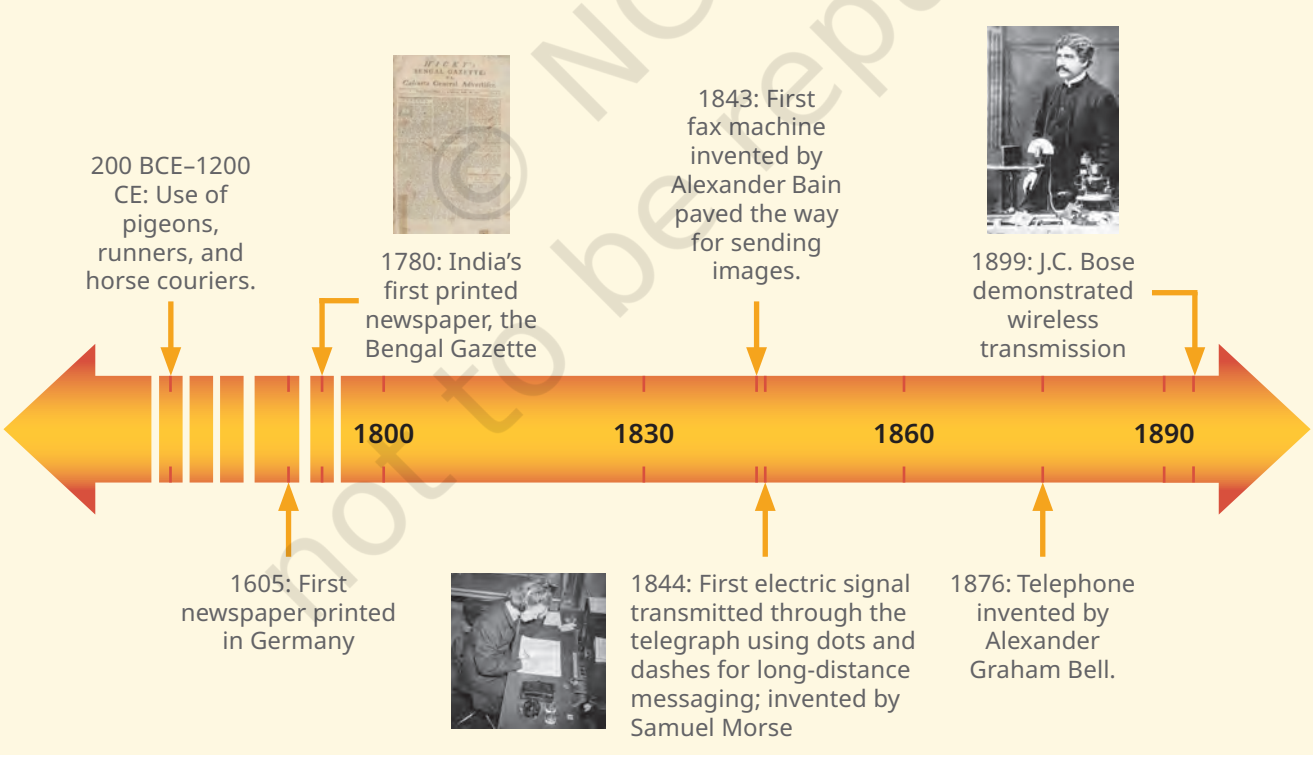

Fig. 7.23. Timeline of development of communication systems

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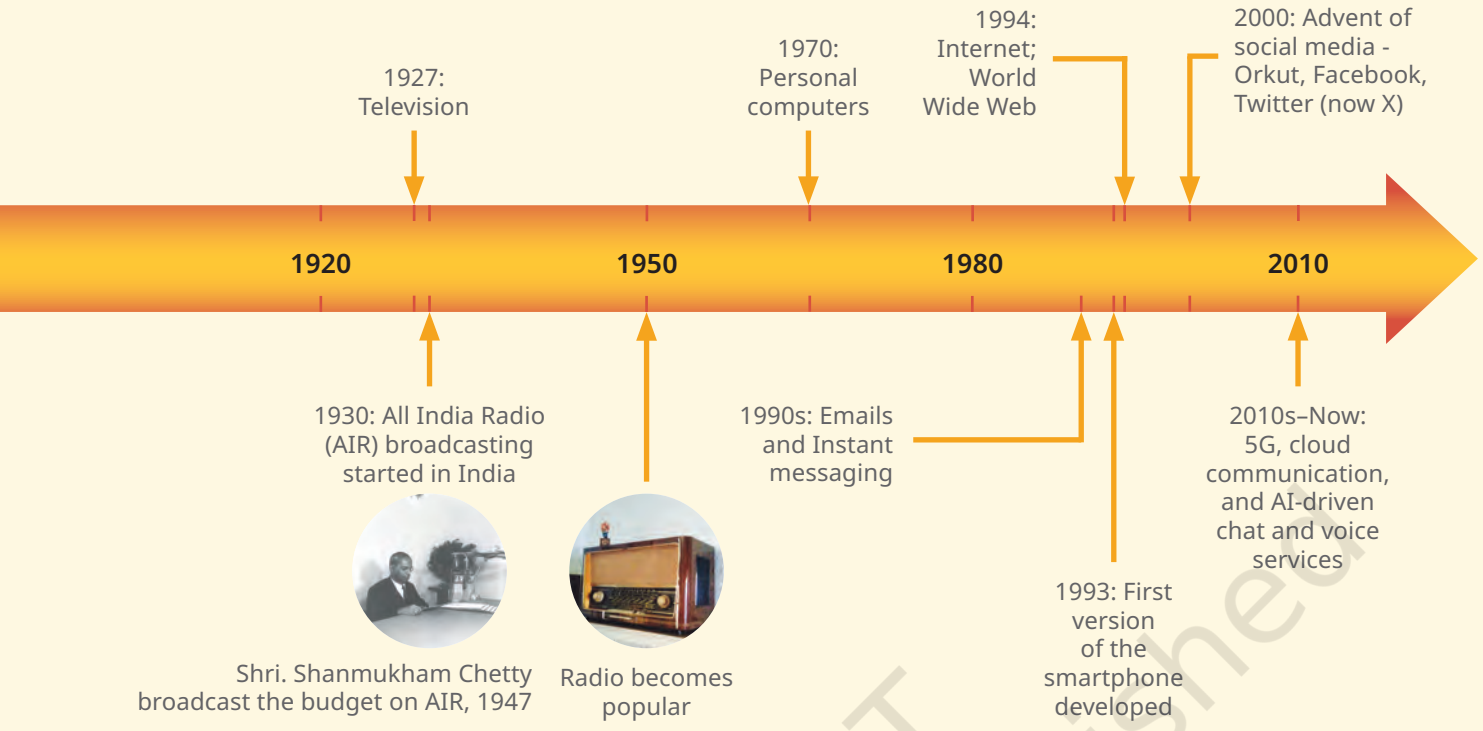

Fig. 7.23. Development of communications systems contd...

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DON'T MISS OUT

J.C. Bose — The man who invented wireless transmission

Fig. 7.24. J. C. Bose

Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858–1937) was an Indian scientist who pioneered wireless transmission using microwaves in the millimetre range. In 1895, he showed in an experiment in Calcutta that signals could pass through a wall, using a bell and a remote-control gun. He also invented a new type of coherer, a key part of early wireless systems which decoded transmitted signals. Later, Guglielmo Marconi, an Italian physicist and inventor, **patented** a similar device in 1901 and, the same year, succeeded in transmitting a radio signal across the Atlantic; he won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1909.

Patent: A Right granted by the government or institutions to be the only person or company who can make, sell, or use the invention for a certain number of years.

Despite the challenging research conditions Indian scientists had to face at that time, J.C. Bose invented many devices, such as a galena crystal detector (galena is a common lead ore), which was an early type of semiconductor, antennas, waveguides, etc., but rarely bothered to patent his inventions. This did not help his inventions gain international recognition, although he received several honours, also for his pioneering research on plant physiology. He created the Bose Institute in 1917, which has promoted much research in physics, biology and environmental sciences.

THINK ABOUT IT

- In the 1990s, mobile calls in India cost up to ₹17 per minute, with charges even for incoming calls. Today, India has some of the world's cheapest mobile and internet rates. How do you think this became possible?
- In 2025, there are 1,160 million wireless telephone subscribers and nearly 900 million internet connections in India.
- Ask your family or people in the neighbourhood how they sent long-distance messages before mobile phones were introduced. What has been their experience of using the first telephone or mobile phone?

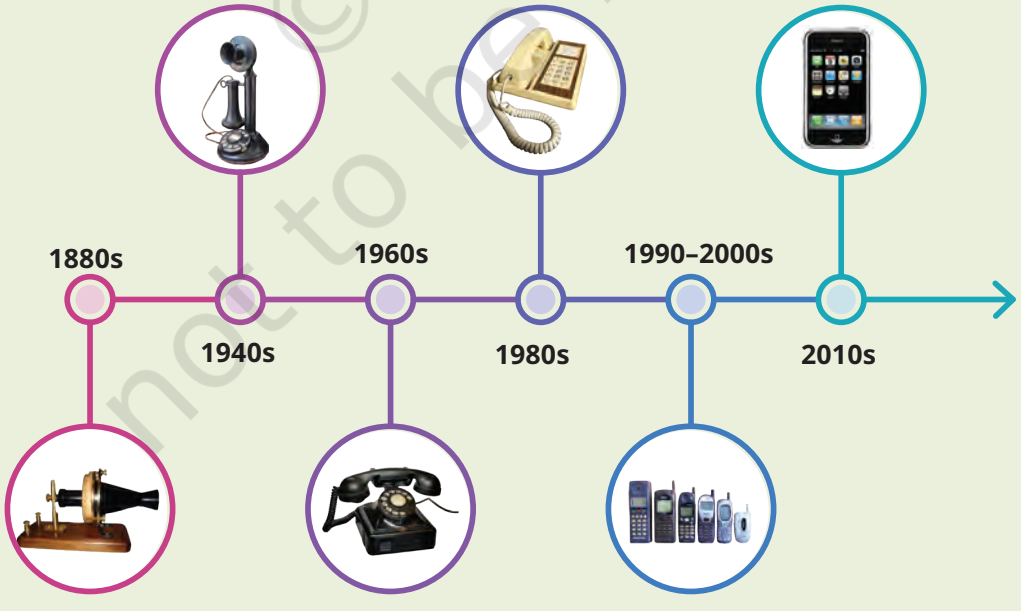

Fig. 7.25. Evolution of the telephone

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THINK ABOUT IT

Do you see other types of infrastructure around you like schools, colleges, training centres, hospitals, health centres, police stations, fire stations, courts, parks, libraries, community centres and so on? This is known as social infrastructure. How do you think it supports the wellbeing and development of communities and society?

Collective Responsibility Towards Infrastructure

While India has developed major physical infrastructure in terms of airports, highways and so on, there still exist some challenges which need to be solved. We see roads being littered, stains on buildings, or writings on monuments. Such damage to public infrastructure reduces ease of living for people and becomes a burden for every citizen. Taking care of public infrastructure is a collective responsibility.

We also need to improve *Panchayat* and municipal administrative services for waste management, sewer systems, traffic management, provision of clean and safe drinking water, pedestrian-friendly footpaths. In addition, we need safe and sustainable infrastructure that uses cleaner energy and

Fig. 7.26. Poor waste management

Fig. 7.27. Potholes on the roads

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Fig. 7.28. Using alarm systems when animals cross railway tracks

Fig. 7.29. Designing elderly friendly transport systems for smooth mobility

environment-friendly materials to minimise pollution and harm to bio-diversity — for instance, using solar panels for generating electricity for the buildings can reduce emissions. The design of the infrastructure should consider the needs of children, the elderly and disabled persons.

Infrastructure in the *Arthaśhāstra*

According to Kautilya's *Arthaśhāstra*, the state, *grāma*, and *sabhās* were actively involved in the development and maintenance of roads and waterways. For instance, the text mentions detailed regulations for the construction of roads, where the *janapadas* were to have roads of different widths based on the nature of traffic that connected towns, villages, and neighbouring countries. For example, royal highways, roads in the countryside, port towns, and roads leading to villages should be 16 m wide. Forest roads and roads within the city should be 8 m; chariot roads should be 2.5 m in width, and so on (measurements simplified to the current metric system).

It also deterred damage to the physical infrastructure by recommending punishments and fines for individuals who violated the rules. For instance, it suggests a severe penalty for those damaging waterworks, such as breaking the dam of a reservoir, and fines for trespassing into public parks by breaking the hedge, and for obstructing paths to waterworks and forests.

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While the government can impose penalties to deter damage to infrastructure, the role of citizens is equally important in maintaining it. Individuals need to use it responsibly and report any damage to the authorities such as in case of potholes or broken streetlights.

LET'S EXPLORE

- Create a 'Community Responsibility Pact' on the board or as a poster. Come up with ideas on how individuals can develop a sense of responsibility towards public infrastructure.
- Can you think of ways in which infrastructure can become more sustainable around you? For example, what changes would you make to your school to make it more eco-friendly?
- Write down a list of five problems you have observed and their possible solutions on a sheet and discuss in class.

Before we move on ...

- Quality infrastructure is the backbone for all other economic activities taking place in a country. This enables better connectivity, employment opportunities for people and enhances ease of living.
- Over time, India has witnessed phenomenal growth in physical infrastructure, and it is the duty of every citizen to preserve and maintain it.

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Questions and activities

1. Which form of physical infrastructure has been built in your area in the last decade? How do you think it has benefitted you or your family members? If you could build something for the community, what would it be?

2. How does infrastructure like ports, highways, and airports create jobs in different parts of the country? Can you think of indirect ways people benefit from it?

3. Why is it important to think about the environment when building new infrastructure like roads or airports? Can infrastructure development and environmental protection go hand in hand? If yes, how?

4. How can better infrastructure (like roads, airports, communication systems) help during natural disasters like floods or earthquakes?

5. Have you ever noticed people misusing public spaces, like scribbling on walls, breaking streetlights, or damaging benches? What are its consequences? Write your observations and suggest solutions to prevent it.

6. Prepare 'scenario posters' for the following situations:

   - A new factory is planned in an area. What form of infrastructure is required for its smooth operation?
   - Self-cleaning roads, underground highways, and high-speed bullet trains could be part of a futuristic city! Imagine the kind of infrastructure that would be required in the future that could help ease the lives of the people and communities in your city, town or village for various day-to-day functions.
   - Think about upgrades to the infrastructure near you, considering the terrain of your area, such as coastal, mountainous, plains, etc., and the type of natural calamities your region is prone to.

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- → If you could design a new railway or metro station, what would it look like and what features would you add to make it more fun and comfortable for the passengers?

7. Today's modern infrastructure requires consistent technological innovations. For instance, electric vehicles are increasingly being used by people as a cheaper alternative to polluting fuel like diesel or petrol. Find out about other innovations in infrastructure that can improve ease of living or mobility for communities.

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CHAPTER 8

Banks and the Magic of Finance

The banker is not only a middleman; he is the producer of a vital service, enabling entrepreneurs to transform ideas into reality through credit.

– Joseph Schumpeter, Economist

The Big Questions

1. *What is financial infrastructure, and what does it comprise?*
2. *What are the main functions performed by banks and how do they impact people's lives?*
3. *How does financial infrastructure contribute to a nation's progress?*

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Fig. 8.1.

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we learned about India's physical infrastructure, like roads, railways, and telecommunication, which support economic activities driven by money-related transactions. Do you recall the flow of money from shopkeepers to workers as salaries, who further spent it on essential items (chapter 'From Barter to Money' in Part 1 of this textbook)? How do these monetary transactions take place between people? Also, how is the development and maintenance of the vast physical infrastructure funded?

Bank: A financial institution that collects money from people in the form of deposits and lends money to people or borrowers as loans.

This is made possible by financial infrastructure — a network of **banks**, payment systems, stock markets, and other financial institutions that help people, businesses, and the government facilitate financial transactions and manage money. Let us find out more about them.

LET'S EXPLORE

Fig. 8.2. Bank

This picture is from a bank. What do you think the people are doing? Ask your family members if they have visited a bank and learn more about the activities there.

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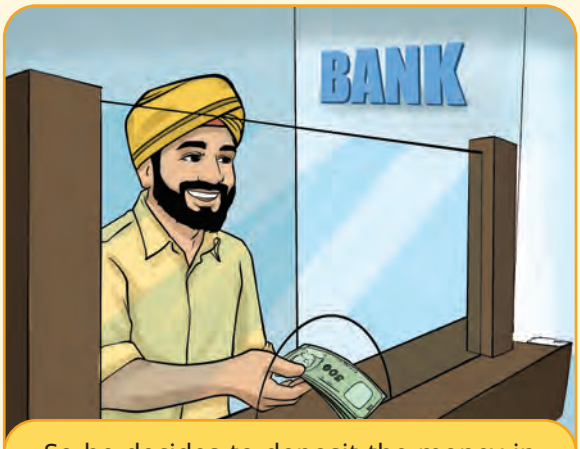
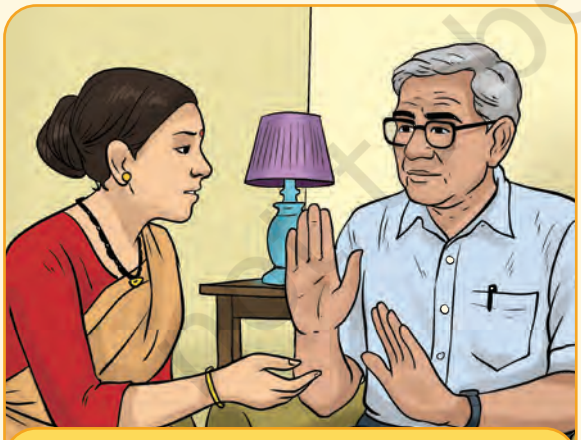
Navdeep saves ₹3000 from his salary every month. Saving all that money in his cupboard might not be safe.



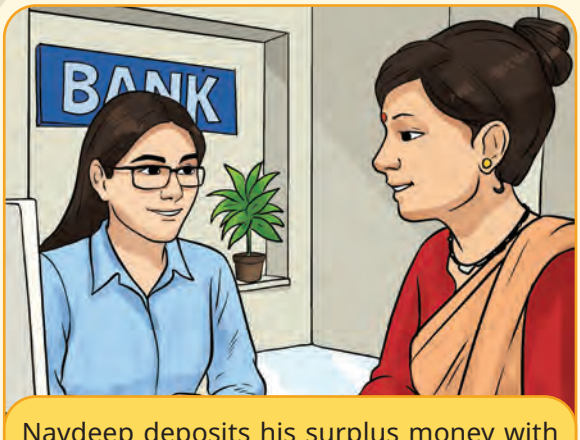
So he decides to deposit the money in a bank.

Fig. 8.3. (a) Navdeep makes a deposit

Rima runs a business making bamboo products. She needs some money for a few business operations.



When friends and family couldn't help as much as required, she decides to take a loan from the bank and repay it later.



Navdeep deposits his surplus money with the bank, and the bank provides Rima with the remaining amount she needs for her business as a loan.

Fig. 8.3. (b) Rima takes a loan

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THINK ABOUT IT

→ Why does Navdeep think that saving at the bank is better than keeping cash at home?

→ Can Navdeep and Rima lend to each other directly without the bank? What could happen in that case? Discuss.

What are banks and what do they do?

Banks help make monetary transactions easy by offering services such as saving, withdrawing, and borrowing money. These services are used by a wide range of people, including farmers, shopkeepers, nurses, and also businesses and institutions. To use the services of a bank, one first needs to open a bank account. The person or business is then called a bank account holder, and the bank offers them several services. Let us learn about these services.

Deposits: Money placed in a bank account that can be withdrawn as per the terms of the bank and often earns interest.

Hold deposits

A bank accepts and holds money (**deposits**) that people put into

Banks provide the following types of accounts:

Savings account

This account is for individuals who save regularly and earn interest on such savings. It opens with a minimum deposit and allows money to be added or withdrawn, though there are limits on how often the depositor can withdraw each month.

Current account

This account is for businesses and traders who often make and receive payments. It doesn't earn interest, but generally, there are no limits on how many times money can be deposited or withdrawn.

Fixed deposit account

This is a one-time deposit kept for a fixed period, like 3 or 5 years. After that time, the bank returns the original amount, plus interest, which is usually higher than what a savings account offers.

Fig. 8.4. Types of bank accounts

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the bank account. They not only keep it safe for us but also lend it to businesses or other people. In return, the banks give us some extra money over a regular period (say **quarterly** or monthly or annually) in the form of '**interest**', which helps the amount of our money saved to grow over time. Through this, banks encourage individuals to save.

Let us understand how your savings would significantly increase if you save for a long time.

Imagine you get ₹1000 on your birthday from your mother. You take it to a bank and deposit it in your account. The bank pays 6% interest on this amount each year if you don't withdraw it. At the end of one year, you will have:

Original amount + one year's interest, i.e.,

₹1000 + 6% of 1000

= ₹1000 + (6/100 × 1000) = ₹1000 + 60 = ₹1060.

If you don't spend this money next year as well, you earn interest on ₹1060, not just ₹1000, which is 6% of 1060 = ₹63.60.

So, the total money at the end of the second year would be:

1060 + 63.60 = ₹1,123.60

Fig. 8.5. Money grows due to compounding

So, you earn an interest not just on the original amount of ₹1000 but on the amount including interest earned in previous years. As you can see, the interest earned in subsequent years increases, from ₹60 in the first year to ₹63.60 in the second year, and so on. This process of earning interest on previous interest is known as compounding. If you continue saving for 12 years, your money will grow to ₹2012.20. This highlights how compounding is a powerful financial concept that helps your money grow exponentially over time.

Quarterly: It means occurring four times a year, at the end of every three months.

Interest: It is the amount charged for borrowing money or the amount gained by lending money, which is usually expressed as a percentage.

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The Magic of Compounding – The story of a King and a Sage

A king from Ambalappuzha, Kerala, known for his love for chess, once challenged a visiting sage to a game. The king offered any reward to the sage if he defeated him. However, the sage asked for a simple reward — one grain of rice on the first square of the chessboard, two on the second, four on the third, doubling each time for all 64 squares. The king was surprised at the sage's small demand and agreed. But he lost the game to the sage and asked his courtiers to place the rice grains on each square of the chessboard as promised. The eighth square had 128 grains, which was the last square of the top row. The ninth square had 256 grains, the 10th had 512, the 11th had 1024 and so on. But as the grains kept doubling, the total grew significantly. By the 16th square, it was already 32,768 grains, and by the 32nd square, over 210 crore! The king realised how powerful exponential growth can be — but only after paying a heavy price. This story shows how compounding works, and how small amounts can grow into large sums over time!

Fig. 8.6.

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THINK ABOUT IT

→ How does one track so many transactions of deposits and withdrawals? The bank provides a diary-like document called a passbook that keeps a record of all the receipts and payment transactions. This can be updated regularly at the bank.

→ Look at the passbook in Fig. 8.7. Observe all the particulars under the expenses (**debit**) and income (**credit**). Why is keeping records of financial transactions important? Discuss in the class.

Debit: Taking money out of an account

Credit: Receiving money in an account

DATE	PARTICULARS	CHEQUE NO	DEBIT	CREDIT	END BALANCE
13.01.25	TRF/company salary account			10500.00	15000.00
17.01.25	TRF/1252/payment of rent	10523	6000.00		9000.00
28.01.25	UPI/DR/Regal cinema		1500.00		7500.00
29.01.25	UPI/DR/Coffee house		400.00		7100.00
03.02.25	Cash deposit self			500.00	7600.00
15.02.25	SMS Charges		12.00		7588.00
31.03.25	Interest credit			1327.00	8915.00

Fig. 8.7. Entries in a passbook

Offer loans or credit

Banks lend money to borrowers as **loans** for specific purposes such as buying a house or vehicle, funding education, etc. Businesses borrow money for purchasing new machinery and raw materials, transporting products, launching new products in markets, among other purposes. Just as banks pay interest on savings to depositors, they charge interest from borrowers on the loans they provide. After a specified period, the borrower repays the loan amount, along with the interest charged by the bank.

Loan: An amount borrowed from banks or financial institutions, with the obligation to repay it with interest at a later time.

DON'T MISS OUT

The banks pay lower interest rates on savings deposits to depositors and charge a higher interest rate on loans from borrowers. This difference in interest rate is a source of income for the banks. Let us understand this through an example.

Anand deposits ₹200 in his bank account, and the bank offers an interest rate of 2% on his savings. The bank lends the amount of ₹200 to Shreya and charges an interest rate of 5%. Shreya repays the amount of ₹10 (5% of ₹200) as interest on loan along with the original loan amount of ₹200, making the total ₹210. The bank pays ₹4 (2% of ₹200) to Anand as interest and earns ₹6. It is important to note that the banks have reserve money and do not lend all the deposits as loans to individuals or businesses.

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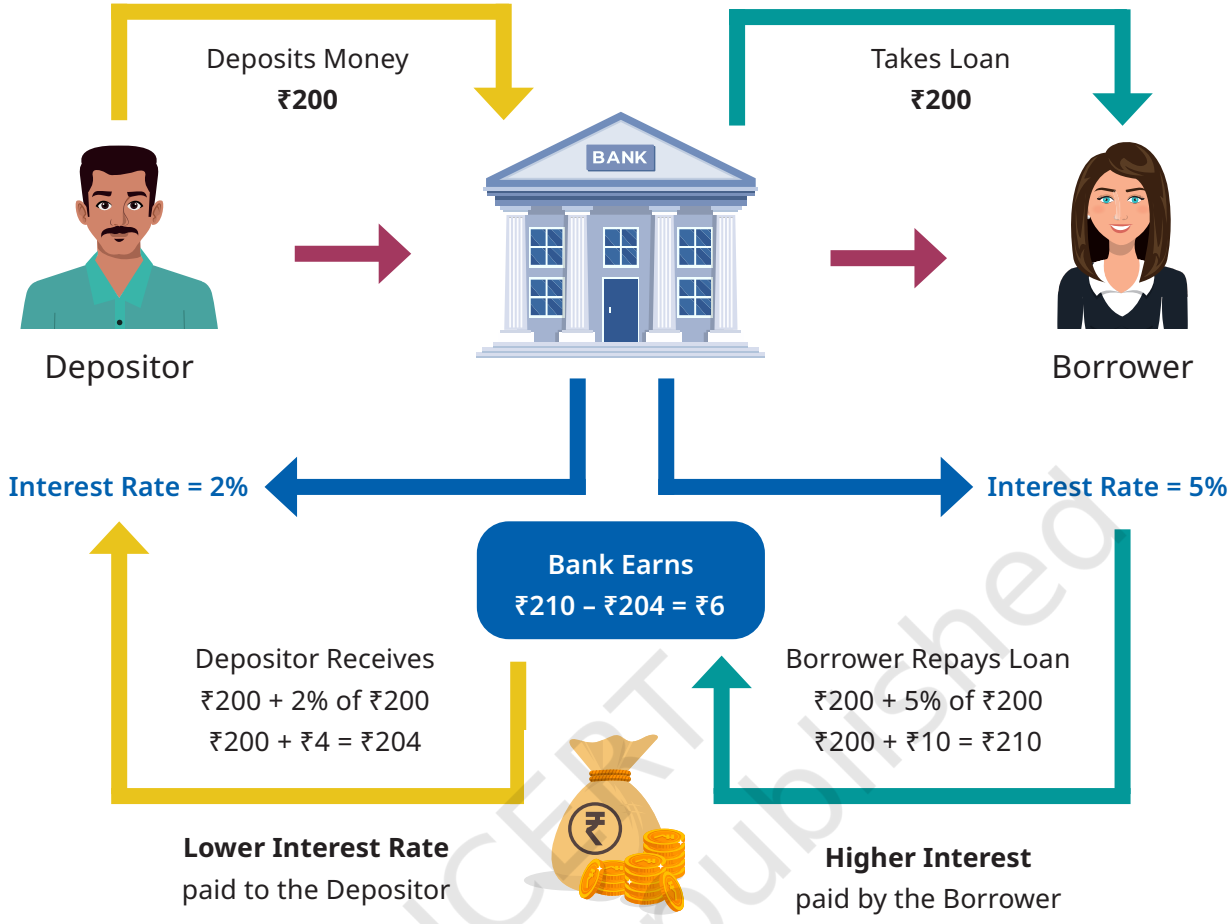

Fig. 8.8. Simplified diagram to illustrate how banks make money

How the Jan Dhan Yojana revolutionised banking in India

Before 2014, only 15 crore Indians had bank accounts, with most relying on cash. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, launched in 2014, aimed to give every Indian, especially low-income earners, access to a bank account without requiring a minimum balance or fees. Since then, over 50 crore accounts have been opened — mainly by women. Now, banking services are used by people from all walks of life. For instance, farmers borrow money to start a small business or expand their agricultural activities. Workers receive their wages directly into their bank accounts, and students who perform well academically receive scholarships from institutions into their accounts. Such direct transfers have reduced middlemen and ensure the timely disbursement of funds.

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Other Financial Institutions

Apart from banks, Indian post offices offer a variety of financial services, including savings schemes such as National Savings Certificates (NSC), Kisan Vikas Patra accounts, and Sukanya Samriddhi accounts. Their vast network and presence, even in remote locations, make them a popular savings option.

Fig. 8.9. Post office

There also exist other financial institutions that support specific sectors. For example, the Industrial Finance Corporation of India funds businesses in areas like power and textiles. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) supports rural development by funding banks that give loans for farming, village industries, and infrastructure like roads and irrigation.

With numerous banks and financial institutions, it is essential to have clear rules and regulations that everyone follows. But who sets these regulations?

Reserve Bank of India – Banker to Banks

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is the bank that supervises the Indian banking system. It is also called India's central bank. Countries have central banks which supervise and manage policies related to their banking system.

RBI was established in 1935 and performed some of the functions of a central bank. After Independence, the RBI was transferred to the Government of India, and has been functioning as the banker of banks, the central bank, since 1949. It maintains accounts of other banks and facilitates exchange of funds between them. It also provides loans to banks and the government.

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Fig. 8.10. Entrance of RBI office in Delhi

RBI sets rules and regulations regarding —

- Printing and distributing Indian currency like banknotes
- Fixing of the **benchmark interest rates**

Interestingly, the entrance of the RBI office in Delhi is flanked by the statues of a *yakṣha* and *yakṣhi*. According to Hindu mythology, *yakṣhas* belong to a class of demigods who act as the guards of treasures for Kubera, the God of Wealth. RBI could be compared to Kubera, with its sole right of issuing currency and by being a banker to banks!

Benchmark interest rate: The base interest rate that the RBI fixes for lending money to commercial banks.

THINK ABOUT IT

→ In ancient India, temples acted like banks. Although they did not accept public deposits like modern banks, they lent money to artisans, merchants, and the local government for building infrastructure. Contracts between the temples and the concerned party were etched on copper plates. These have survived to give us a glimpse of how they functioned.

Fig. 8.11. Copper plates with inscriptions, Pandya Kingdom.

→ One such example is an inscription from Kodumbalur in Tamil Nadu, dating back to the 13th century, which refers to communities that borrowed money from the Tirumudukunramudaiya-Nayanar temple with an agreement to pay interest.

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Payment Modes and Systems

Payment modes and systems are another key part of the financial infrastructure. They help with the transfer of money from one person to another. Some of the modes of payment include cash, cheques, and debit cards. However, **payment systems**, such as the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), have become popular as a quick and convenient way to transfer money today. Let us learn more about them.

But first, let us understand how account holders can withdraw cash from bank deposits.

Generally, savings can be withdrawn from the bank account through multiple methods —

i. One can fill out a withdrawal slip at the bank, submit it at the cash counter, and withdraw cash at the bank from their account. You can try filling one for yourself at the end of this chapter!

ii. Banks also provide debit cards to customers when they open an acoount. Debit cards can be used to withdraw cash from Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) at any time. These self-service machines are like mini-banks, available 24×7 at public places like bus depots, local shopping markets, railway stations, airports, malls, etc. To withdraw cash, one has to insert their debit card into the machine and input the **PIN (Personal Identification Number)** and the exact amount to be withdrawn.

Payment system: A mechanism that facilitates the clearing and settlement of financial transactions, allowing individuals, businesses, and organisations to transfer funds between each other.

PIN: A numeric code (usually 4 to 6 digits) used for authentication and security in various applications, especially for financial transactions like ATMs, debit cards, etc.

Fig. 8.12. Debit cards (front and back sides)

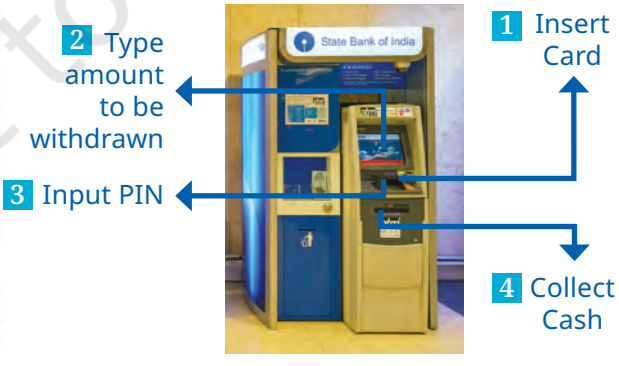

Fig. 8.13. ATM

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How can money be transferred from one bank account to another?

Cheque

A cheque is a paper instrument that allows you to pay someone directly from your bank account. The bank provides a cheque book with multiple cheques. To pay ₹5,000 to your friend Rohan, you write a cheque with the exact amount, Rohan's name, and your signature. Rohan can then deposit the cheque in his bank. The amount gets withdrawn (debited) from your account and is transferred (credited) to Rohan's bank account.

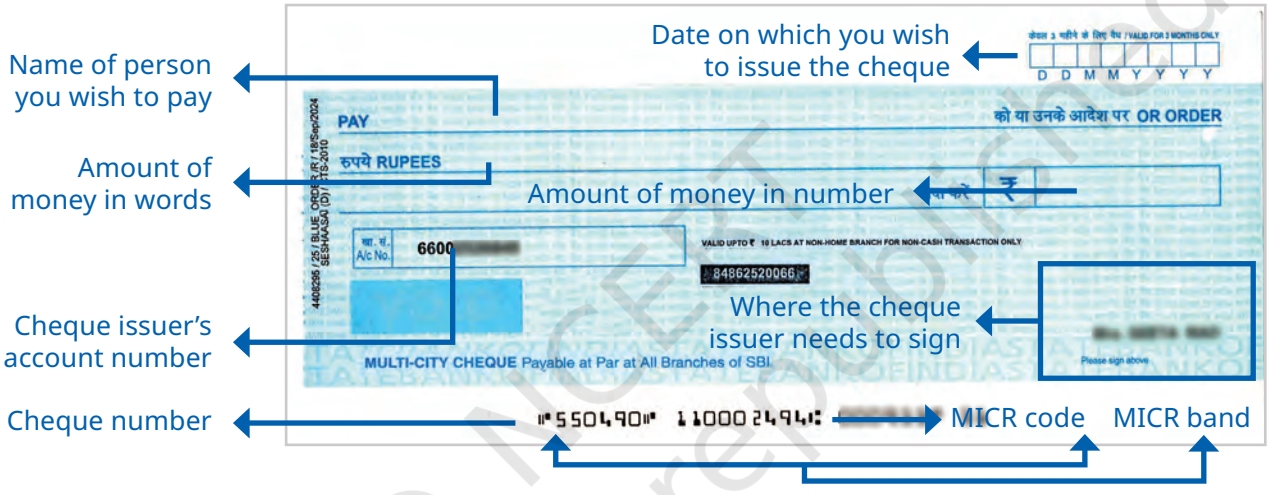

Fig. 8.14. Cheque

The transfer or payment of money through a cheque requires physically visiting a bank and takes time. However, electronic modes of payment allow instant transfers from the sender's account to the receiver's account. These are called electronic payment methods, some of which are discussed below.

Debit cards and Point of Sale (POS) machines

Debit cards can be used to make payments at retails stores such as a grocery or clothing store, and chemist. On one hand, they help withdraw cash from ATMs as seen above, and on the other hand, they enable the transfer of money from customers to the store owner. Customers use their debit card by swiping or inserting it into a POS machine, inputting the amount, and entering the

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PIN. The cashier can also enter the amount, while the customer enters their PIN. The amount is instantly deducted from the customer's account.

Internet Banking (Netbanking)

Another electronic tool for transferring money is internet banking or online banking, which allows account holders to check balances and transaction history, and transfer money, through the bank's website or mobile application using a computer or smartphone.

Mobile payments

Additionally, digital payments are made through mobile phones using digital payment applications such as BHIM, which is based on the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) payment system. UPI enables easier and quicker digital money transfers using a QR code or the phone number of the recipient, allowing quick payments and receipts. It reduces the need for physical passbook updates. It allows users to check balances and track transactions anytime on their phone.

Fig. 8.15. Debit card being used in a POS machine

Fig. 8.16. Internet banking using a computer

Fig. 8.17. QR code used for payment

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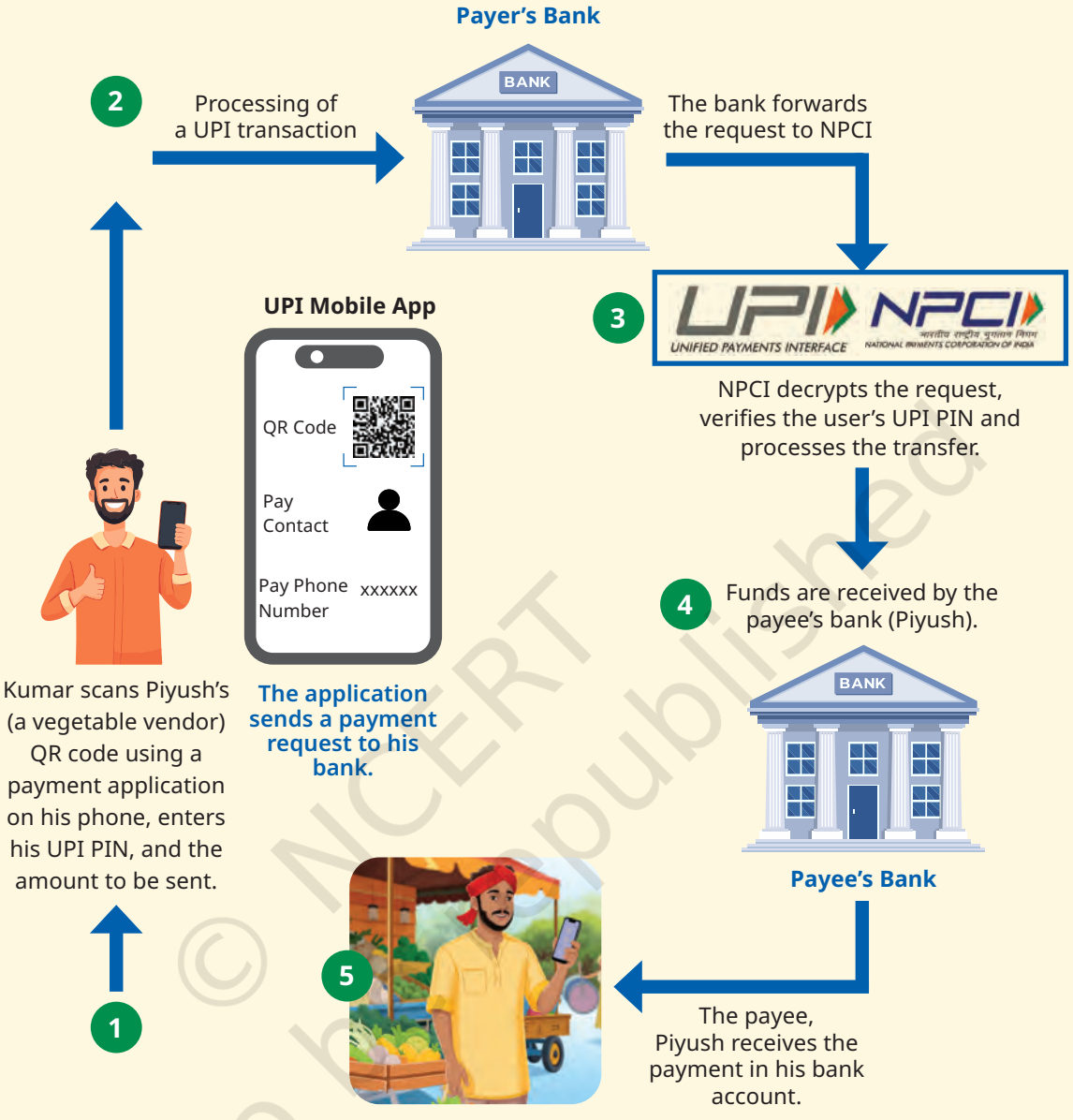

Fig. 8.18. Process of a digital transaction between a buyer and a seller using UPI

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Unified Payments Interface (UPI) — India's gift to the world of payment systems

Traditionally, transferring funds from one person's bank account to another person's account required filling out the cheque with the details of the receiver, dropping it into the bank's drop box or handing it over to a bank official. It was time-consuming and

discouraged a majority of people from using banking services, leading to heavy reliance on cash due to which billions of rupees were used every day without a record.

This changed in 2016 when the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) launched UPI, a fast and secure digital payment system that enables transfer of funds. See Fig. 8.18 to learn more about this with an example.

Do you see how effortlessly UPI allowed a digital transaction between Kumar and Piyush? You may remember that during the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining social distancing became essential to prevent the spread of infection. During this period, UPI gained popularity for supporting cashless transactions. Moreover, its user-friendly design in multiple languages makes it accessible to everyone.

THINK ABOUT IT

India's digital payments revolution is expanding rapidly across borders. Nepal was the first country to adopt India's UPI as a payment platform in 2022. Today, nations such as the United Arab Emirates, France, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Mauritius and so on have adopted it, and more countries are increasingly showing interest. This instant, efficient and secure system is truly India's gift to the world of payment systems!

Stock Market

Previously, you learned about various markets like retail, wholesale, online and so on. Imagine the stock market like a giant online book store — but instead of buying books — people buy and sell **shares**.

Suppose you own a small restaurant and wish to expand it with a variety of cuisines. However, if you do not have enough money, you can borrow it from friends in exchange for a share of profits, for which they become part-owners of your business. Similarly, a 'share' is a part-ownership in a company. So, when you buy a share of a company, you become a part-owner of that

Share: A share is a unit of ownership in a company, representing a portion of its capital stock.

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Investment: The act of putting resources in assets expected to gain value over time.

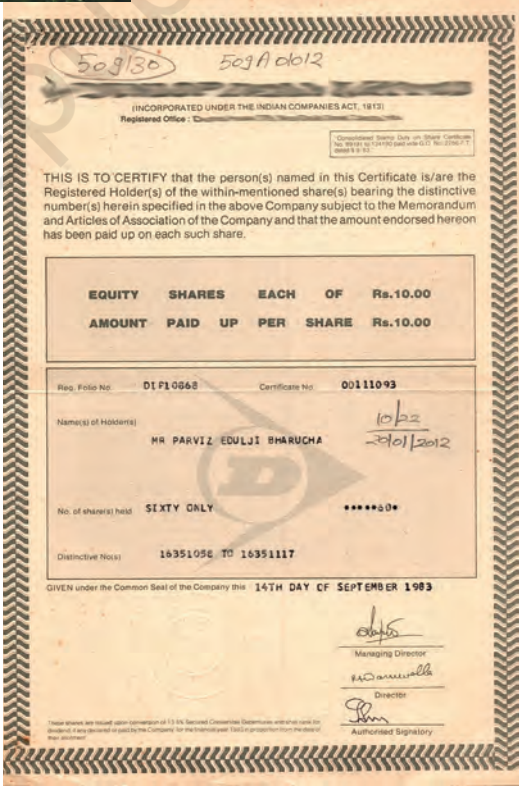
company due to your **investment**. The more shares you own, the higher your ownership. If a company is like a big chapati, each share is one piece. A collection of shares can be referred to as a stock. Holding stocks allows individuals to put their savings where they expect to see an increase in their value when the share price increases; on the other hand, issuing shares help companies raise funds for their operations.

Fig. 8.19. Bombay Stock Exchange

The actual buying and selling of shares takes place at the **stock exchange**. In India, the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) was established in 1875 and is one of the oldest stock exchanges in the world. Back then, the share transactions were conducted manually using paper tickets, which in the modern world have been replaced by digital transactions using advanced computers and other devices.

Stock exchange: Marketplace where financial securities like stocks are traded.

Like commodity prices, share prices also rise and fall. When the share prices of many companies fall simultaneously, it results in a stock market crash. On the other hand, a rise leads to a stock market boom.


(INCORPORATED UNDER THE INDIAN COMPANIES ACT, 1913)
Registered Office :

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that the person(s) named in this Certificate is/are the Registered Holder(s) of the within-mentioned share(s) bearing the distinctive number(s) herein specified in the above Company subject to the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Company and that the amount endorsed hereon has been paid up on each such share.

EQUITY SHARES EACH OF Rs.10.00
AMOUNT PAID UP PER SHARE Rs.10.00

Reg. Folio No. DIF10868 Certificate No. 00111093
Name(s) of Holder(s) MR PARVIZ EDULJI BHARUCHA
No. of share(s) held SIXTY ONLY
Distinctive No(s) 16351058 TO 16351117
GIVEN under the Common Seal of the Company this 14TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER 1983
Managing Director
Director
Authorised Signatory

Fig.8.20. Share certificate in earlier days

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Fig. 8.21. A rise in the prices of shares of a large number of companies causing a stock market boom

Fig. 8.22. A fall in the prices of shares of a large number of companies causing a stock market crash

Trading shares can bring gains or losses, as their prices fluctuate due to many factors.

If a company is doing well and people think it will earn money, its shares become more valuable. But if the company has problems — like a bad product, a workers' strike, or a big loss — fewer people want its shares, so the price of the share drops. Apart from a company's performance, government's policy changes like new laws, **tax rules**, political instability, wars, or **economic shocks** can also cause share price fluctuations.

THINK ABOUT IT

Why do companies issue shares, and why do people buy them? Are there any benefits of owning shares?

Economic shocks: Sudden unexpected events that cause big changes in a country's economy — how people earn, spend, and save money. For instance, natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, etc.), war, pandemic, sudden changes in government policies, prices of commodities, etc., can bring economic shock to an economy.

Tax rules: Tax is a compulsory contribution given by individuals and businesses respectively to the government on income and profit. It is also added to the cost of some goods, services, and transactions. The government sets rules regarding the payment of various taxes.

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OTP: It stands for One-Time Password — a unique temporary code made up of letters or numbers that is used for verifying identity or authorising any transaction.

Financial frauds and how to prevent them

Digital payments have made life easier, but users must beware of fraud and scams. Fraudsters trick people through fake calls or messages to download harmful apps or mislead people into sharing bank details or One-Time Passwords (**OTPs**). This gives them access to the user's mobile or computer, enabling them to steal personal data from the device and draining money from the bank accounts.

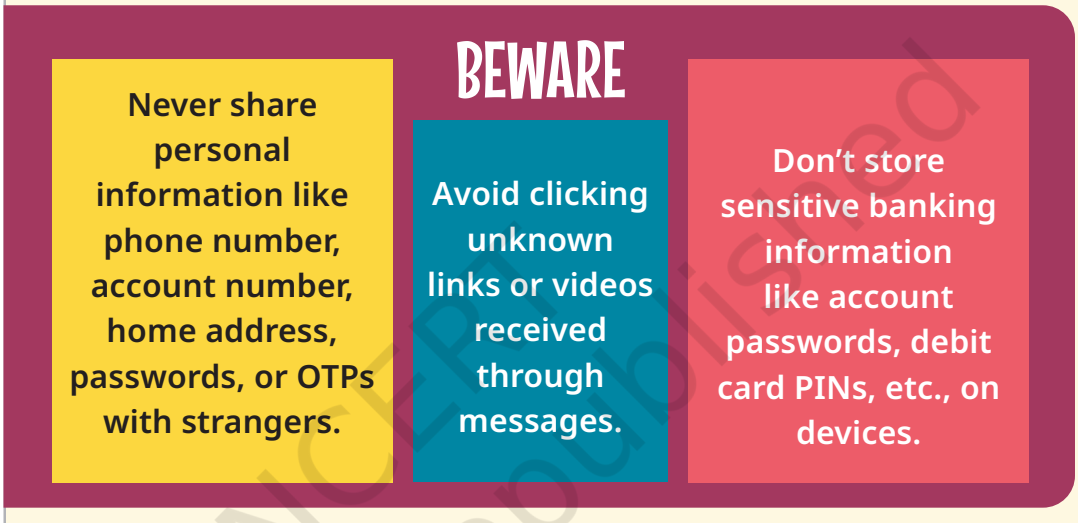

Fig. 8.23. How to stay safe while making digital payments?

In case of fraud, report via helpline **1930** or the **National Cybercrime Reporting Portal**.

Before we move on ...

- Financial infrastructure comprises financial institutions like banks, payment systems, the stock market and so on. These help with the flow of money among people, businesses, and the government by enabling smooth financial transactions.
- It also promotes savings, credit and investment that boosts economic activity, and ultimately contributes to the nation's prosperity.

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Questions and activities

1. What is financial infrastructure? How does it complement physical infrastructure?
2. How does having a bank account help people? Should everyone be required to have a bank account?
3. What could be the possible advantages and disadvantages of compound interest for savers and borrowers?
4. How does financial infrastructure enable the flow of money between households and businesses? Can you think of how the government can facilitate this flow?
5. What could be the reason for the higher interest rate earned on fixed deposits as compared to a savings account?
6. Sahil received ₹10,000 as a prize in a poster-making competition. His father promises to pay him 12 per cent interest per year if he does not spend the amount. After 3 years, how much money would Sahil have?
7. How does the stock market help mobilise the savings of individuals? In what ways do companies benefit by issuing shares to people?
8. How can we balance the convenience of digital payments with the risk of cyber fraud?
9. Ask your family members or neighbours about—
   - → how they save money?
   - → whether they use UPI, ATM or cheques, the kinds of transactions they perform through UPI; do they find UPI better than using cash or not, and why.
   - → if they or their acquaintance have experienced digital fraud, for instance, through a fake call or message asking for bank details. What did they do when they realised it was a scam, and what did they learn from that experience?

   Summarise your findings in a table or short report. Share one surprising insight with your class.

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10. Create a Financial Safety Poster.

   → Design a poster with dos and don'ts of digital banking safety (for example, not sharing OTPs, reporting frauds).

   → Include emergency numbers or websites like *https://cybercrime.gov.in* or 1930 helpline.

   → Hang the posters in school corridors or the library.

11. Cheques are often used to pay utility bills. Ask your parents to allow you to fill out the cheques for a few monthly payments.

12. Suppose you have to withdraw ₹10,000 from your bank account, how would you fill out the cash withdrawal slip at your bank? Let us try below!

नकद आहरण पर्ची / CASH WITHDRAWAL SLIP

यह प्रपत्र चेक नहीं है / This Form is not a Cheque

AABBC DDEEF शाखा / Branch

(केवल मूल शाखा के उपयोग के लिए) (Usable at Base Branch Only)

दिनांक / Date 00/00/0000

मुझे/हमें 10,000/- रुपये अदा करें / Pay to self / us the sum of Rupees TEN THOUSAND RUPEES ONLY

₹ 10,000/-

मेरे/हमारे बचत खाते में नामे करें/to the debit of my/our Savings Bank A/c No./भुगतान करें

0	0	0	0	0	0	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

खाताधारक के हस्ताक्षर

Signature of A/c Holder A.B.Ccccc

खाता धारक(कों) का(के)नाम

Name(s) of A/c Holder(s) AAAAA BBBBB CCCCC

कार्यालय के प्रयोग के लिए / For Office Use

लेनदेन आई डी / Trans. ID

टोकन संख्या / Token No.

श्री/श्रीमती/सुश्री / Pay to Sh./Smt./Ms.

को ₹ प्रदत्त

पारित अधिकारी के हस्ताक्षर / Signature of Passing Officer

श्री/श्रीमती/सुश्री / Pay to Sh./Smt./Ms.

को ₹

प्रदत्त

अदाता अधिकारी के हस्ताक्षर / Signature of Paying Official

Fig. 8.24. Cash withdrawal slip

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Noodles

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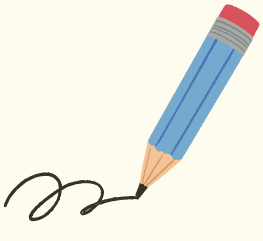
*‘Noodles’ is our abbreviation for ‘Notes and Doodles’!



Political Map of India

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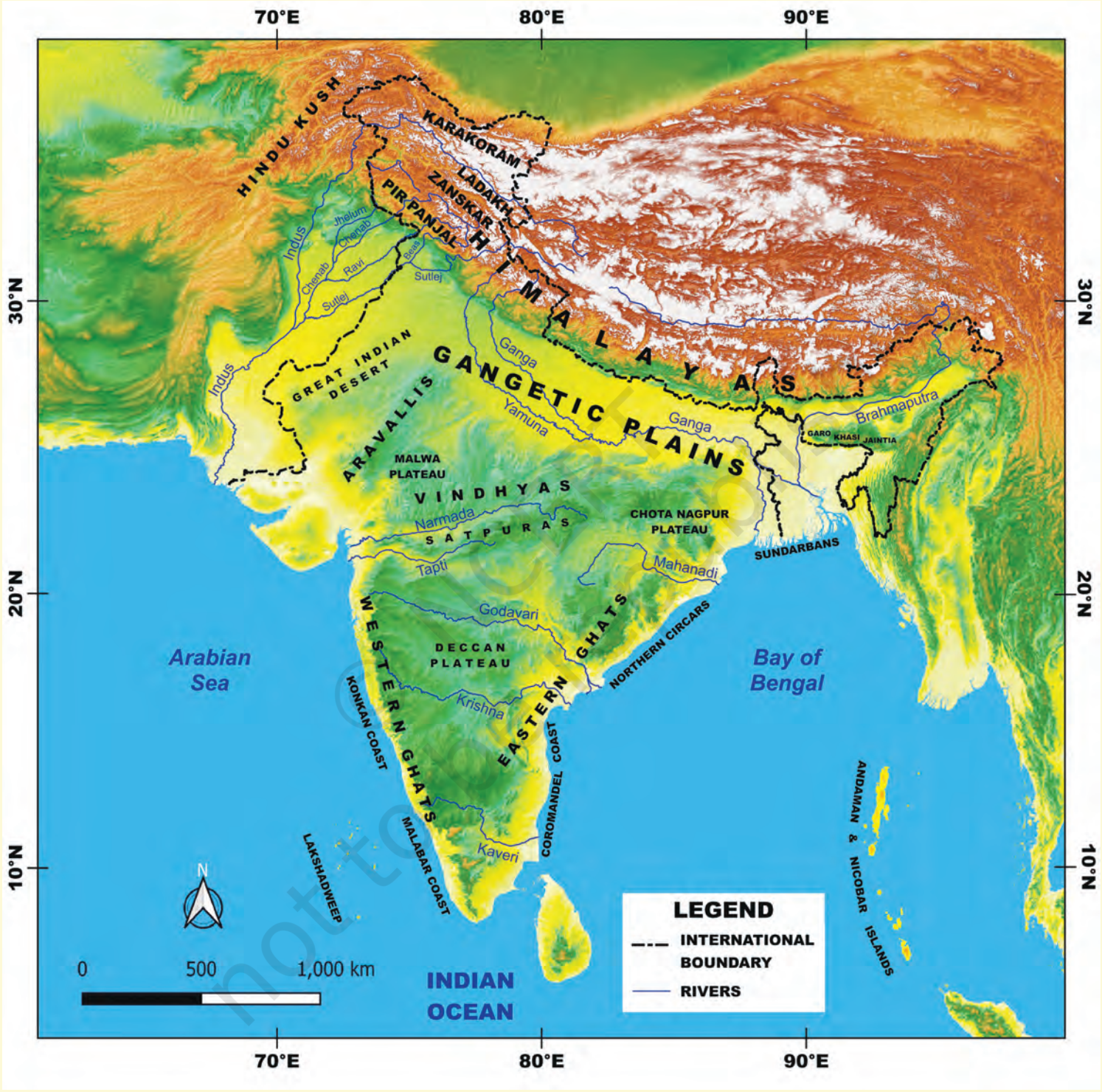

Physical Map of India

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Glossary

Aesthetics: Principles behind the appreciation of beauty

Allude: Hint at or suggest

Annihilate: Destroy completely

Antecedent: Something that came before

Apiculture: Beekeeping for collecting honey

Arbitrary: Random, without reason

Bilateral: Involving two parties, especially countries

Bodhisattva: A person who is on the path to enlightenment (in Buddhism)

Buffer state: A small country located between two larger, more powerful countries

Caravan: A group of traders or pilgrims travelling together

Cargo: Goods carried by ships, planes, trains, or trucks

Celestial: Relating to the sky or heaven (depending on the usage)

Clearing (financial): Ensuring accuracy of payment details between banks for safe transfer

Decrypt / Decryption: A computer process that reads a secret or coded message so it can be understood.

Defacing: Damaging or spoiling something

Diaspora: People from one country who live in many different countries around the world

Doctrine: Belief or set of beliefs held by a group, usually a religious group

Ethnicity: Cultural background

Expatriate: A person who lives outside their native country

Furrow: A narrow long ditch made in the earth usually with a plough

Humanitarian aid: Help given to people in emergencies or disasters

Inextricably: Closely connected and impossible to separate

Landlocked: A country that is completely surrounded by land and has no coast

Laudatory: Expressing praise

Meander: Follow a winding path

MGNREGS: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme — a government scheme that promises work (paid jobs) to rural families so they can earn wages

MICR code: A special printed number and line on a cheque that banks use to read and process cheques quickly by machine

Mulching: Covering soil with dry leaves, straw, or crop remains to keep it moist and protect it

Ordained: Made (someone) a priest

Patent: The legal right given to an inventor so only they can make or sell their invention.

Pisciculture: Fish farming

Point of Sale (POS) machine: A device a shop uses to accept card or digital payments from customers

Profusely: In large amounts

Punitive expedition: A military action taken to punish a political entity or group for a perceived offence

Regime: A particular government or a system or method of government

Resurgence: A return or rise after a fall

Samagra Shiksha: A central government programme to support and improve school education across the country.

Stilts: Poles that help a building or a person to stand at a height above land or water

Strategic: Plan with a particular purpose in mind

Sukanya Samriddhi Account: A government savings scheme aimed at saving money for a girl's education and future

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Sustainable infrastructure: Infrastructure that uses eco-friendly methods and materials

Teller: A person who deals with customers' transactions in a bank

Trajectory: The path or progress of something over time

Transboundary (as in transboundary river system): Something (like a river) that crosses or is shared by more than one country

Transplant: To move a sapling from one place (like a nursery) to another (like a field)

Tumultuous: Involving strong emotions

Unremitting: Without relaxing or slowing down

Vigilance Commission: A government body that looks into complaints about misuse of power or corruption by officials

Vigour: Energy, enthusiasm, effort

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- Fig. 2.6, Fig. 2.8, Fig. 2.9, Fig. 2.12, Fig. 2.14, Fig. 2.17, Fig. 2.18, Fig. 2.22, Fig. 2.24, Fig. 2.25, Fig. 2.26, Fig. 2.28
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